

SACRED HISTORY

SELECTED FROM

THE SCRIPTURES,

WITH

ANNOTATIONS

AND

REFLECTIONS,

SUITED TO THE

COMPREHENSION OF YOUNG MINDS:

Particularly calculated to facilitate the

STUDY of the HOLY SCRIPTURES in SCHOOLS and
FAMILIES, and to render this important Branch of
EDUCATION easy to the TEACHER, and pleasing
to the PUPIL.

VOL. IV.

From Ahab's Conquest of Ben-hadad King of Syria, to the
Time of our Saviour's Birth.

By Mrs. TRIMMER.

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S E C T. I.

THE REIGN OF AHAB KING OF ISRAEL
CONCLUDED.

AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

(And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?)

And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-Gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee at the word of the LORD to day.

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B

Then

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man (Micaiah the son of Imlah) by whom we may enquire of the LORD; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.

And the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them.

And Zedekiah the son of Chenanah made him horns of iron: and, he said, Thus saith

LORD,

the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand.

And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, spake unto him saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good.

And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

So he came to the king, and the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD?

And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd.

4 MICAIAH'S PROPHECY.

And the LORD said, These have no master : let them return every man to his house in peace.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee, that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil ?

And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD : I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left :

And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead ? and one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

And the LORD said unto him, Where-with ? and he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also : go forth, and do so.

Now therefore behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

But

MICAIAH IMPRISONED. 5

But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner-chamber to hide thyself.

And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and enter into the battle, but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over

his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

And it came to pass when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, surely, It is the king of Israel: therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God moved them to depart from him.

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

So

JEHOSHAPHAT'S ALLIANCE. 7

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria.

And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.

So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is probable that Jehoshaphat, when he went to visit Ahab, supposed him to have been a convert, and thought that it would be to the advantage of the kingdom of Judah, if he formed an alliance with the king of Israel, as it was likely to produce harmony amongst those tribes, who had for some time been estranged from each other; and he planned a scheme of strengthening the connection, by a marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter: in this instance Jehoshaphat proceeded according to the rules of *worldly policy*, without consulting *the will of the LORD*, as he ought to have done; but since he did it inconsiderately, and not presumptuously, he was only reproved for it, as you will read afterwards.

You may remember, my dear, that when Ahab obtained his memorable victory over the Syrians, Ben-hadad entered into a covenant, to restore all the cities which his father had formerly taken from the Israel-

8 ZEDEKIAH'S PROPHECY.

ites: whether he performed any part of this engagement or not is uncertain, but it is evident he did not completely fulfil it; for Ramoth-Gilead originally belonged to the tribe of Gad: Jehoshaphat too easily gave way to the benevolence of his disposition. You find, however, that he would not go out to battle till he had enquired *the will of the LORD*; neither would he hearken to the prophets or priests of the groves, who assured Ahab of success. Zedekiah was a leading man amongst them, and to give force to his predictions, made use of a sign in imitation of the practice of true prophets. By the horns of iron he meant to represent, that the Israelites should defeat the Syrians with irresistible force. Jehoshaphat was apprehensive of fallacy in these, and required more satisfactory encouragement before he would proceed to battle.

Ahab, with great reluctance, sent for Micaiah, whom it seems he had imprisoned from the time that he had rebuked the king on account of his clemency to Ben-hadad; this severity had not intimidated the prophet, but he delivered his message with fidelity and confidence: you must however be careful, not to understand Micaiah's prophecy entirely in a *literal* sense. The beginning of it is certainly ironical; "*go and prosper, &c.*" (as much as to say, if you will suffer yourself to be deluded, you must take the consequences; for God will not restrain you by violent means) and you find that Ahab understood it so: what followed were undoubtedly the *words of divine inspiration*, and contained the prophet's *commission from the LORD* to foretel Ahab's death. "*I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, &c.*" the remainder appears to have been a kind of parable spoken

MICAH'S PROPHECY. 9

spoken by the prophet, for the admonition of Ahab and his people, and therefore we must not suppose that he had *an actual view of the ALMIGHTY on the throne of heaven*. But in respect to such difficult passages as these, my dear, we can go no farther than *conjecture*, which should always be formed on some *clear* texts of scripture; now it may be proved*, from many places in the bible, that God *bates* liars, and has declared he will cut them off; and has also commanded, that all false prophets should be put to death; so that we may venture to conclude, that Micaiah knowing by divine inspiration, that the LORD would make these lying priests instruments of punishment to Ahab for refusing to hear his servants, only endeavoured to give force to his exhortations by this familiar representation; which seems to have been suited to the conceptions which Ahab and his people entertained of the SUPREME BEING.

It is not necessary, my dear, for us to puzzle ourselves with attempting a farther explication of Micaiah's prophecy, as no *christian* will infer from it that the LORD *caused* these prophets to tell lies, and then *justified* them in it; neither could the *Israelites* have imagined so, if they had properly considered the ways of the LORD, whose *justice* was remarkably displayed even in the present instance. Had Ahab lent a willing ear to the divine warning, he would not have gone on an expedition that was like'y to prove fatal to him; as he despised it, the LORD left him to the consequences of his presumption and impiety.

It is rather surprizing that Jeh-shaphat should go with Ahab, notwithstanding Micaiah's predictions;

* See Essay for a new Translation.

10 PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

perhaps he might think it right to keep his engagement, as the prophet had not forbidden him, and Ahab's fall only was predicted. Ahab seems to have gone into the field of battle with great apprehensions, and strove to avoid his fate by disguising his person. Jehoshaphat's too easy compliance would in all probability have cost him his life, had he not in the instant of danger cried unto the LORD for help; who knowing the good disposition of his heart, pardoned his errors, and protected him from the destroying sword.

Micaiah's prophecy was now in a great measure fulfilled; for on Ahab's death the Israelites *were scattered on the mountains of Gilead, like sheep having no shepherd*: we find his prediction accomplished also respecting the dogs licking the blood of this impious king.

The history of Ahab, my dear, affords a variety of instruction concerning a *particular providence*, and the *justice of God's dealings with mankind*; we may infer from many passages in it, that no events happen by *chance*; blessings are undoubtedly *directed by the will of God* and misfortunes can never happen without *DIVINE permission*. To the Supreme Disposer of all things, therefore, we should be thankful for every circumstance of our felicity; and to him should we address our prayers for deliverance from danger and support in affliction.

SECT.

S E C T. II.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHO-
SHAPHAT KING OF JUDAH.

AND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people, from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD GOD of their fathers.

And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city.

12 JEHOSEHAPHAT'S REGULATIONS.

And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you: take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.

And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters:

also

GOD'S MERCY TO JEHOSEPHATH. 13

also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It may be considered as a great instance of the mercy of God, that Jehoshaphat returned to his house in peace, from an expedition which he had so inconsiderately undertaken; but we understand, that he did not entertain the least inclination for idolatry; on the contrary, in the day of battle he put his whole trust and confidence in the LORD, and earnestly implored divine assistance; he was however deserving of rebuke, and therefore the prophet Jehu was graciously sent, to shew him how he had exposed himself to the divine displeasure. By the prophet's reproof to Jehoshaphat, we are taught to avoid the society of impious men, lest we encourage sin by appearing to countenance it, and endanger the corruption of our own principles.

We * likewise learn, that God is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, and to punish for every offence; neither doth he withdraw his protection every time men forfeit it: we must not however presume on the forbearance of the LORD, but imitate the example of Jehoshaphat, who repented of his sin, and endeavoured to repair the injury it might otherwise have done to religion, or the souls of others: he did not like Ahab, return to his house heavy and displeased at the admonition of the LORD; but received it with be-

* Henry's Annotations.

14 INSTRUCTIONS TO MAGISTRATES.

coming humility, and resolved to visit every part of his dominions, that he might personally exhort his subjects to live agreeably to the commands of God : he had formerly sent preachers to instruct them, and now appointed judges, whose business it was to punish the violators of the law, and decide controversies between man and man. The charge which he gave these judges, contains excellent instructions to all magistrates, teaching them to examine every cause that comes before them with caution and impartiality ; to consider themselves as the ministers of God for the punishment of evil-doers, and the protection of the innocent ; and to remember that they ought, as far as the infirmities of human nature will admit, to imitate the ALMIGHTY in his administration of Justice.

Jehoshaphat also appointed a *supreme court*, which sat at Jerusalem, for the decision of difficult causes : if the inferior judges could not agree about the sense of any law, this court was to determine the controversy : it was composed of some of the most learned amongst the priests and Levites, for decision in cases relative to religion ; and of some of the wisest and most experienced of the elders of Israel, for the determination of *civil causes* ; that is to say, such matters as related to the rights of the people, in respect to their possessions, &c.

S E C T. III.

THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH KING OF ISRAEL.

NOW Ahaziah the son of Ahab reigned in the stead of his father.

And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly.

And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-geber.

Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Then Moab rebelled against Israel, after the death of Ahab.

And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria,
and

and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go enquire of Baal-zebub the God of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease.

But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, Go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?

Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back?

And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

And

And he said unto them, What manner of man was he that came up to meet you, and told you these words?

And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty, with his fifty. And he went up to him. And behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

And Elijah answered, and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God; thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

And

And he sent again a captain of the third fifty, with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight.

Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burned up the two captains of the former fifties, with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him; be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron; is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.

Now

JEHOSHAPHAT'S KINDNESS. 19

Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoshaphat still retained a kindness for Ahab's family; and as his alliance with them by the marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter had (we may suppose) been a condition of their promoting each others interest; this induced him to admit Ahaziah as a partner in the profitable trade which he carried on to Ophir; but as Jehoshaphat was very blameable in this particular, he was reproved and punished for it; and warned by the breaking of his ships, to break off his alliance with Ahaziah, and it seems he took the warning.

You have read, my dear, that king David gained a signal victory over the Moabites: this people continued in subjection to Solomon and Rehoboam; but after the revolt of the ten tribes, they became tributaries to the kings of Israel, though they had still kings of their own, but these were little better than viceroys. We are not told the exact time when they rebelled; but may conclude, that it was at the latter end of Ahaziah's reign, as we read of no battle fought at this period.

Though Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel, and consequently must have had a very bad education; yet it might have been expected he would have taken warning from the destruction in which his father had been

20 GOD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY.

been involved, by crediting the prophets of Baal; but you find, he followed the wicked example of his parents: however, he was soon stopt in his sinful career by a fatal accident. Baal-zebub, the name of the idol he sent to consult, signifies the *lord of flies*; given him, perhaps, on account of some deliverance the inhabitants of the place had received from a plague of flies, which they foolishly attributed to his power. It was impossible for Ahab to dishonour the LORD JEHOVAH in a greater degree than he did by this action, and therefore we must acknowledge the *justice* of the LORD in the severe message he sent him by his prophet; neither must we overlook the *mercy* of God in this instance; for there is the greatest reason to suppose, that though Ahaziah was threatened with death for sending to enquire of a dumb idol, yet if he had humbled himself and sought the *living* God, the sentence might have been remitted; instead of doing so, you find he defied the LORD, and sent three parties of soldiers to seize the prophet by violence, and bring him into his presence. Ahaziah was well acquainted with the person of Elijah, and judged, from the description his messenger gave, that it was certainly he who sent them back. The captains who commanded the two first bands, seem to have had the same bad principles with their sovereign; for instead of addressing Elijah with reverence, they called him in *contempt of the LORD JEHOVAH*, “*the man of God*,” and impiously presumed to command the servant of the Supreme Being to attend their wicked prince: this was such an open defiance of God, as called for immediate vengeance; and therefore the LORD sent fire from heaven

to

GOD'S PROTECTION OF PROPHETS. 21

to destroy these wicked blasphemers and their followers. You must not suppose, my dear, that Elijah had the command of the elements, and could deal forth destruction according to his own will and pleasure on all who offended him by personal insults; neither would so good a man have taken such severe revenge for private injuries done to himself, because he would in such a case, have acted contrary to his duty; but on this occasion he spake as the LORD inspired him, who caused him to pronounce those words before the judgment was inflicted, in order to prove that he was, as he professed to be, the man or *prophet of God*; who would not suffer his servants to be persecuted as such with impunity, since forbearance would have given room for idolaters to triumph, and would have brought disgrace on true religion. There was no wantonness of cruelty in the SUPREME BEING; on the contrary, the captain who humbly deprecated the wrath of God was freely spared, and Elijah was ordered to accompany him; by which means this officer was secured from the punishment which the king would most likely have condemned him to, if he had returned without executing his royal commands.

Elijah did not endeavour to conceal himself from Ahaziah; for repeated deliverances had taught him to repose confidence in the PROVIDENCE of GOD; neither did he seek to gain respect by his outward appearance: for his best attire, as we may judge by the messenger's description, was a hairy garment, fastened with a leathern girdle; yet, in this mean garb, how truly honourable was he; enlightened by the HOLY SPIRIT, sustained by miracles, and commissioned to reprove kings!

22 ELIJAH'S INTREPIDITY.

Elijah did not enter the apartment of the monarch as a prisoner, but in the spirit and power of the LORD, boldly to perform the prophetic office, and declare to Ahaziah's face, the sentence he had been commanded by God to pronounce upon him : the fear of the LORD fell on this wicked king and all present, which restrained them from offering violence to Elijah ; and he soon saw the accomplishment of his prophecy in the death of Ahaziah, who reigned only two years.

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

AND it came to pass when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee: for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth; and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? and he said, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace.

And Elijah said unto him, Elisha tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him,

Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? and he answered, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace.

And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

And it came to pass when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

And

And it came to pass as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy

master: lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up; and cast him up on some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.

And when they came again to him (for they tarried at Jericho) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears that the LORD had made known to Elijah, that he should soon be removed from this world; on which account he visited the sons of the prophets in their schools or colleges, in order to admonish, instruct, and bless them, before his departure: there is no doubt but the thoughts of losing the advantage of his direction and example, must have filled them *all* with great concern; but Elisha was particularly affected on this occasion, for he not only honoured Elijah on account of his high office, but also entertained great affection and esteem for him as a man of singular virtue and piety, the loss of whose company he should most likely have daily cause to deplore; he therefore resolved to attend him to the last, being desirous of receiving as much advantage as possible, from his conversation; for this reason,

ELISHA'S REQUEST. 27

reason, he was displeased with the interruption of those, who could only tell him, what he already knew to his sorrow.

Considering the great massacre which Jezebel had a few years before made of the prophets, it is surprizing to read of there being such numbers of them at this period; but it was an act of God's particular providence, "to * preserve the schools, where men were trained and employed in the exercises of religion and devotion, and to which good people resorted, to solemnize the appointed feasts with prayer and praises when they had not conveniencies for sacrifice or incense, and were prevented from going to the Temple at Jerusalem: and thus religion was kept up in a time of general apostacy."

It is likely, that those who stood to view afar off, were desirous of attending Elijah; but kept at a distance when they found that Elisha wished to be alone with his master; they were however sufficiently near to be eye-witnesses of the event.

"It † may be supposed, that the dividing of the river Jordan was ordered by the LORD, for an assurance to Elijah, that he would as certainly translate him to a place of happiness, as he had conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan."

Elijah being pleased with the constancy of Elisha's affection and attendance, permitted him to ask what he should do for him? Elisha, knowing that he was anointed to succeed his master as *chief* or FATHER of the PROPHETS, earnestly desired to be eminently qualified for the important services he might be required

* Henry's Annotations.

† Ibid.

28 ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION.

to perform: he well knew that the HOLY SPIRIT which inspired Elijah, was the gift of GOD; but begged for this prophet's *intercession with the LORD*, that he might have a *double portion* of it; as Elijah had, in those intervals wherein he was *left to himself*, committed errors, Elisha wished to be *at all times* under the guidance of DIVINE DIRECTION; from an humble sense of the infirmities of his nature, and the expectation he had of great opposition from the impious king, who at that time reigned over Israel. Elijah could not give his friend immediate satisfaction, but advised him to continue his attendance, that he might be prepared, and in a proper disposition of mind, to receive this distinguishing honour. He had asked a *hard thing*, what was indeed, beyond this great prophet's power to bestow *as his own right*; all he could do, was, to intreat the LORD to transfer the inestimable gift he himself had so long enjoyed, to his successor, in such a degree as should seem good to infinite wisdom. We may suppose, that Elijah spake *prophetically* when he told Elisha, that if he should *see* him when he was taken from him, he might consider this circumstance, *as a sign* that the LORD would grant his desire: the event happened agreeable to his wishes; he saw his dear master taken up triumphantly to heaven; yet, "notwithstanding * he received the appointed token that his request would be granted, he could not refrain his sorrow for his own and Israel's loss, but brake forth into pathetic lamentations; " *my father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!*" Elisha considered himself as a fatherless child, thrown on the

* Henry's Annotations.

ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION. 29

wide world, for Elijah had been the guide of his youth. The people of Israel had lost their best guard; for this prophet, by his counsel, reproofs, and prayers, had kept off the judgments of God, which their wickedness would otherwise have provoked, and was, on this account, better to them than the *strongest force of horses and chariots*: the departure therefore of this holy man, was like the routing of an army, an irreparable loss."

The miraculous manner in which Elijah was taken from earth is very astonishing; and it is impossible to give a more satisfactory explanation of it, than that which we find in the scriptures; because there is no accounting for it by *natural means*, as it was an extraordinary act of ALMIGHTY POWER, exerted for a *peculiar* purpose.

Numbers of the prophets had been *permitted* by God to come to untimely ends, which had given occasion to wicked men to exult over their survivors, and to dispute the power and goodness of the LORD, as he had not interposed to preserve his servants from the rage of their enemies: that remaining prophets, therefore, might not be intimidated by the miserable fate of their predecessors, from discharging their duty, it pleased God to *convince* them, that there was another world, in which they would be secure from the persecutions of their enemies, and receive a recompence for all the sufferings they should endure on earth: nothing could more effectually answer this purpose, than the *visible* translation of Elijah; as it pointed out to the faithful, that those holy men who went before, were exalted to a state of happiness, though their exaltation

was not apparent to mortal eyes, because they left their *bodies* behind them; but we may reasonably conjecture, (from many texts in scripture) that their deaths had been made easy to them by the comforts of the HOLY SPIRIT; and that their souls were honoured in the sight of *angels*, who conducted them to that paradise of rest appointed by the SUPREME BEING, for those, who by *patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and IMMORTALITY*. If any one amongst the prophets deserved to be exempted from death *as a reward*, surely it was Elijah; who had so often boldly exposed his life, in the discharge of the duties of his office. How his body was changed, and rendered fit for a celestial existence, is a vain enquiry, for it is impossible for us to know.

Elisha, when his transport of grief was over, clad himself in Elijah's mantle, which he received as a token of the descent of the HOLY SPIRIT upon him; and willing to try whether he was also invested with the power of Elijah, he smote the waters of Jordan, earnestly seeking the aid of the LORD, and received the same favour as had been lately granted to his master. This miracle was a convincing proof to the sons of the prophets, who were spectators of it, that the Spirit which inspired Elijah, did rest upon Elisha, and that he was entitled to the same respect as they had been accustomed to pay to his predecessor; they therefore readily submitted to him as their *chief* or *father*, which no doubt was a great encouragement to Elisha.

The proposal which the prophets made to search for Elijah, might proceed from their affection for him, which inclined them to hope that he would yet be re-
stored

SEARCH FOR ELIJAH. 31

stored to them; or they might think it necessary to make this search, in order to justify to the people their acceptance of Elisha in his stead. Elisha was at last *ashamed* to oppose them, lest he should be thought wanting in respect to his old master, or reluctant to resign his mantle.

Elijah left this world in the beginning of the reign of Jehoram king of Israel, whose history you will shortly read.

S E C T. V.

ELISHA HEALETH THE WATERS OF JERICHO—
THE CHILDREN OF BETHEL SLAIN BY BEARS.

AND the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

And he said, bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

And he went forth unto the spring of the waters and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death, or barren land.

So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him,

Go

CHILDREN OF BETHEL. 33

Go up, thou bald-head, go up, thou bald-head.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Elisha it seems, went on to Jericho; here he waited whilst the fifty men went in search of Elijah; the inhabitants of the place, willing perhaps to prove his power, informed him of the unwholesomeness of the water, and the barrenness of the soil.

Jericho * was the first city which the Israelites took, after they passed the river Jordan; there is reason to suppose, that the inhabitants were incorrigibly wicked, for they were all *extirpated* by the command of the LORD, excepting Rahab the harlot and her relations; the Israelites were strictly enjoined to destroy the city, and every thing in it but the vessels of silver and gold, which were consecrated to the service of the Tabernacle; and that the ruins of Jericho might remain as a monument of God's wrath against the Canaanites, and of his mercy to his chosen people, Joshua, in the name of the LORD, forbid them to *rebuild* it; assuring

* Sect. xxviii. vol. ii.

34 WATER OF JERICHO.

them, that whoever should attempt it, "*would lay the foundation in his first-born; and in his youngest son should be set up the gates of it.*" This threatening (which implied that the whole posterity of the man who presumed to build on that spot, should be cut off) proved effectual for a great number of years; but at length, in the days of Ahab king of Israel, * Hiel, one of the idolatrous inhabitants of the city of Bethel, in defiance of the curse well-known in Israel, began to build it: his eldest son died immediately, as Joshua had foretold; but Hiel proceeded in contempt of the DIVINE WRATH, and gradually lost all his children, the youngest of whom was cut off just as he had compleated his impious work: the blessing of the LORD was however denied to the city, till it pleased GOD to restore, by the hand of Elisha, wholesomeness to the water, and fertility to the soil, for the benefit of his servants the prophets, who had a school there.

After this acceptable service was performed for the city of Jericho, Elisha departed thence, in order to visit another school of the prophets at Bethel: in this city was one of the golden calves which Jeroboam set up as an object of worship, to which abominable idolatry the inhabitants of the place still adhered; there is reason to think, that they had received intimation of Elisha's approach, and regarding him as their professed adversary, resolved to treat him with derision and contempt; for this purpose they sent their *children* or *young men* †,

to

* See Sect. lvi. of vol. ii. † These comments on the death of the children of Bethel, are taken from the vindication of Elisha's conduct towards them, which may be found in "Dr. SHARPE'S *second Argument in defence of Christianity, &c.*" This learned author

to insult him not merely as an old man, but as the servant of the LORD JEHOVAH. The indignity was not intended against Elisha alone: they did not only reflect upon his age, person, and character, by calling him **BALD HEAD**, but upon his master Elijah, and in him upon the service and servants of God, and even upon God Himself: for when they said to Elisha, **GO UP**, and repeated it, they meant to bid him ascend as his master had done before him, who went up, you know, by a whirlwind into heaven. It is very likely, that these impious youths, who came forth out of the city and mocked, would have gone farther, and might have killed the good old man: we cannot therefore wonder, that Elisha was commanded to *curse* (or doom them to destruction) by the *authority of the LORD*; nor that so dreadful a judgment was inflicted on them; for the honour of God was concerned in the preservation of his holy prophet, and the punishment of such open insulters of his chosen servant.

Elisha, in every instance of his life which is recorded, appears to have been of a mild, benevolent disposition; from which there is reason to conclude, that he would have forgiven any personal affront to himself: and therefore we cannot suppose, that he would have been so severe, as to have cursed a number of little boys and girls, who were playing innocently in the

author informs us, that the *Hebrew* word, here rendered **LITTLE**, is a general term for quantity or quality; which, when applied to the offspring of men, does not always imply *little*, or *small in stature*, but is oftentimes used to distinguish them from the more *advanced in years*, the *young* from the *old*. The other word, is in very many places used for *young men* and *servants*.

36 REVERENCE FOR THE AGED.

streets, merely for observing the naked appearance of his head, and desiring him to pass on, and not disturb their mirthful sport: though even *little children* would have been deserving of *rebuke* and *chastisement*, if their parents had taught them the reverence due to the *aged*; but if the inhabitants of Bethel brought up their children from their early infancy, to despise and scoff at the ministers of the LORD; they certainly provoked God to send judgments upon *themselves*: and no circumstance could have afflicted these sinners more, than having their *little ones* torn to-pieces by a furious wild beast, since even wicked persons usually have great affection for their offspring; as for the poor children, *death* could not be an *evil* to them in such a case, but a *mercy*, since it did but remove them from a world where they were devoted to *vice* and *impiety*, into a state of perfect happiness. So, my dear, whether those who were slain by bears were *young men* or *little children*, the justice of God clearly appears, and the prophet is vindicated from the imputation of cruelty; and I hope you will remember the history of this dreadful visitation, that you may regulate your own conduct by it, both in relation to the respect which it becomes you to pay to persons grown venerable by experience and a good life, and the reverence which is due to the ministers of God.

SECT.

S E C T. VI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF JORAM,
(CALLED ALSO JEHORAM) KING OF ISRAEL.

NOW Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria, in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

Nevertheless, he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams with the wool.

But it came to pass when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath

hath rebelled against me; wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? and he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

And he said, Which way shall we go up? and he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom, and they fetched a compass of seven days journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

And the king of Israel said, Alas, that the LORD hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? and one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom went down to him.

And

And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

And Elisha said, as the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts.

And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

And ye shall smite every fenced city and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree,

40 MOABITES SMITTEN.

tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat-offering was offered, that behold there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood;

And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab to the spoil.

And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them; but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good tree:

trees: only in Kir-haraseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit, the slingers went about it, and smote it.

And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joram*, we find, put away the image of Baal; perhaps Jehoshaphat had influenced him in this particular, but he still retained those abominations by which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, had originally provoked the anger of the LORD.

The rebellion of the Moabites was mentioned in a former section; but we do not find that Ahaziah made any attempt to reduce them, notwithstanding the tribute which the king of Moab paid was a considerable revenue to the crown. Joram, sensible of the folly of his predecessor, resolved to chastise the rebels, and hav-

* See Henry's Annotations.

ing a just opinion of Jehoshaphat's merit, solicited him to be his confederate, which he readily consented to. I think we may conclude, from the general tenor of Jehoshaphat's conduct, that he thought it his duty to assist the king of Israel in such a cause, as he had reason to think he had renounced idolatry. Jehoshaphat did not first enquire the will of the LORD, supposing, perhaps, that the king of Israel would do so, and therefore turned his attention towards collecting all the forces he could; and for this purpose demanded the aid of the king of Edom, who was no more than a deputy under him. The plan which Jehoshaphat proposed, appeared a very politic one; but the execution of it brought the three kings into such distress, as nothing but the providence of God could deliver them from. The king of Israel began to reproach the LORD as the author of their misfortune; but Jehoshaphat wisely and piously wished to enquire, by the mouth of some holy prophet, by what means they might be relieved in this unhappy situation, and whether the present enterprize was agreeable to the divine will.

We may suppose that Elisha attended this tedious march by the appointment of God, that he might prove by his counsels and direction "*the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*," as Elijah had formerly been. It is likely that there were many in this combined army to whom the prophet was known, though he kept himself concealed from the kings, till they should wish for his presence.

Jehoshaphat had such honour for a prophet with whom the word of the LORD was, that he willingly condescended to visit Elisha in person, instead of sending

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ELISHA'S INDIGNATION. 43

ing to fetch him ; the other two kings were compelled by their necessities to attend them ; for they could not expect the prophet would obey their summons, as they were idolators

Elisha knew that Jehoram was not reformed, though he had with interested views put away the image of Baal ; he therefore beheld him with a holy indignation, which disturbed his mind so, that he required a *musician* to be sent for ; who by playing on a harp and singing psalms, calmed the tumult of his spirits : from this circumstance we may judge, that it is proper for those who desire communion with God, to keep their spirits quiet and serene, since they are not prepared even for prayer and praise till they can lift up their thoughts to heaven. Elisha was however guilty of no sin in his behaviour to Jehoram, as he kept his anger within due bounds, and dismissed it so soon.

The order which the prophet gave to the suppliant kings, to make the valley full of ditches, was to try their faith and obedience ; the supply of waters, he foretold, could not come by natural means, and therefore when it came, was an earnest of the victory which was also promised. It is supposed, that on this occasion the water miraculously sprang from some of the fountains of the great deep ; (the *ABYSS*, which is thought to be in the center of the earth) which like *the waters above the firmament*, are under the controul and direction of the *GREAT CREATOR*.

It is observable, that this relief came just at the time of offering the morning sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem ; this was in those days a fixed hour of prayer ; and it seems to have been the custom of those
amongst

44 THE MOABITES SELF-DECEPTON.

amongst God's faithful people, who were at a distance from the Holy Altar, to present their petitions to the ALMIGHTY at the same hour; by which means, they, in a *spiritual sense*, joined the congregation.

The Moabites knew the valley was a dry one, and as there had not been any rain, they had no thoughts of its being full of water; and as they were not only unjust in their revolt from Israel, but contemners of God's holy religion, they were permitted to *deceive themselves* to their destruction.

The action of the king of Moab, in sacrificing his eldest son, fills one with horror: it is supposed he did it to obtain the favour of Chemoth, his idol; there was great indignation against Israel for driving him to this extremity; and the people of the LORD unwilling to be spectators of such scenes of unnatural barbarity and impious abominations, withdrew their forces, and returned to their own land.

SECT.

S E C T. VII.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT KING OF JUDAH.

IT came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is in En-gedi.

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the LORD; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court,

And said, O LORD GOD of our fathers, Art not thou GOD in heaven; and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen; and in thine hand is not there power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

Art not thou our GOD, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

If when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

And now behold, the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not;

Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

O our GOD, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great com-

pany

pany that cometh against us ; neither know we what to do ; but our eyes are upon thee.

And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives and their children.

Then upon Jahazel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation ;

And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude ; for the battle is not yours, but GOD's.

To morrow go ye down against them : behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

Ye shall not need to fight in this battle : set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem : fear not, nor be dismayed : to morrow go out against them : for the LORD will be with you.

And

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

And the Levites of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD GOD of Israel with a loud voice on high.

And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood, and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S VICTORY. 49

For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir every one helped to destroy another.

And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil; it was so much.

And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah: for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah unto this day.

Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with

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50 JEHOSHAPHAT'S TRIUMPH.

joy: for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the LORD.

And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: he was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the LORD.

Howbeit, the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.

Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Before Jehoshaphat went with Joram king of Israel on the expedition against the Moabites, he had taken great pains for the reformation of his own people, and the due administration of justice in his kingdom; and we have reason to believe that he renewed his attention to these important objects when he returned to Jerusalem, and therefore it is likely, expected the usual blessings of peace and prosperity; however, he was alarmed with a powerful invasion from the Moabites, who * in revenge for his assisting Joram, collected a confederate army, and marched within a few miles of his capital before he had notice of their design. His conduct on this occasion, was truly consistent with his duty as *king of Judah*; for he did not begin with war-like preparations, but was solicitous *first* to secure the favour of God by humiliation and prayer; the people readily assembled to join with him, earnestly seeking the aid of the LORD.

“The † prayer which Jehoshaphat offered up on this occasion, is deservedly accounted one of the most excellent that we meet with in sacred history.”

God vouchsafed to give an immediate and gracious answer to the humble supplications of this pious king and his people, by the mouth of the prophet Jehaziel a Levite: whether Jehaziel was a prophet before is not certain.

The manner in which Jehoshaphat and his people received this welcome prediction, and obeyed the di-

* Universal History.

† See Patrick's Commentary.

52 JEHOSEPHAT'S STEADFASTNESS.

rection of the LORD, needs no comment or explanation; for I think you cannot fail of understanding, or making proper reflections on it: they soon found, by joyful experience, how safe it was to put their whole trust and confidence in the salvation of the LORD, who certainly would not have permitted these haughty foes to invade HIS land, when the king was faithful and the people obedient; if he had not intended to convince them by a miraculous deliverance, that none should prevail against them if they believed his holy word, and served him with a willing mind.

It * is supposed that the combined army were laying in ambush in different parts, to surprize the Israelites, when the LORD struck them with such terror and confusion, that they knew not friends from foes, but destroyed each other.

It must have been a most transporting sight to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to behold Jehoshaphat and his troops return laden with costly spoils, triumphantly singing the praises of the LORD!

The honour which the king of Judah had lost in the eyes of the surrounding nations by joining himself with Ahab and Ahaziah, was now restored, and peace, with all its train of blessings, crowned the end of his days.

Jehoshaphat himself continued steadfast in the service of GOD, and did every thing in his power to compleat the reformation of his people; but though his authority obliged them to attend to the ordinances of religion, and they were on some occasions influenced by his exhortations and example, to turn to the LORD with sincerity: piety had not taken deep root in their

* Patrick's Commentary.

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hearts, or they certainly would have been solicitous to remove the high places, and serve God in a manner perfectly agreeable to his divine institutions, as they had not only the Temple to resort to, but in various places, priests and Levites attended to expound the law.

You can scarcely be at a loss, my dear, to judge of the character of the good king Jehoshaphat, who certainly was one of the best monarchs that ever sat on the throne of Judah: he never discovered the least inclination to idolatry, nor do we read of his committing any sin, excepting that of forming alliances with the wicked kings of Israel, into which he seems to have fallen through the want of consideration, owing to a precipitate disposition of mind, or a too ready desire of obliging others; but the least remonstrance or reproof brought him to a sense of his duty, and he hastened to repent and regain the favour of God. His behaviour in respect to the invasion of the Moabites, abounds with instruction worthy of the attention of all the kings of the earth.

THE HISTORY OF NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.

Naaman the Syrian, is supposed to have been the general who commanded in that memorable battle wherein Ahab king of Israel was slain; he is said to have been "*a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.*" The Syrians, in some of their excursions into the land of Israel, had taken captive a Hebrew maid, who waited upon Naaman's wife; she was treated with great kindness, which engaged her gra-

titude, and was a servant of the true God; consequently, solicitous to make his glory known. Elisha never had cleansed a leper, yet this little maid, from his other miracles inferred, that he *could* heal her master; and from his usual beneficence that he *would* do so, she therefore expressed to Naaman's wife, a wish that her LORD was with the prophet in Israel. Naaman gave a ready ear to his servant's relation of the wonderful miracles wrought by the hand of Elisha, and appears to have formed an immediate design of applying to this famous prophet; but as he resided in an enemy's country, it was necessary that Naaman should first obtain the permission of his sovereign. The king of Syria, in order to do honour to his general, gave him a letter to the king of Israel, requesting that he would cure Naaman; being, as we may suppose, too haughty to address himself to Elisha, and thinking that Joram could *command* the prophet to exert his skill in Naaman's favour. The king of Israel, though an idolater, was shocked at this application; and was likewise alarmed, lest Ben-hadad should make his refusal to comply with his request, a pretence for a war with him.

If Joram had entertained proper notions of the power of the LORD, he would immediately have referred Naaman to Elisha for relief; however, the DIVINE BEING, who made known to Elisha that Naaman should be cured, directed him also to desire the king to send the Syrian general to him: "Naaman * came with a magnificent retinue to the door of the prophet, expecting to be treated with that distinction which

* Henry's Annotations.

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he thought due to his rank and quality, and that his cure would be performed with great pomp and ceremony; and was therefore highly enraged, when he received only a message from Elisha, *to wash seven times in Jordan, and be clean*: he had never heard any medicinal quality attributed to the water of this river, and thought a contempt put upon Syria, by preferring it to those which flowed through that country; but was easily prevailed on by his attendants, to lay aside his rage, and make the experiment, and immediately his skin became like that of a little child. Convinced now of the power of the *GOD of Israel*, and willing to shew his gratitude for the prophet's prayers, he offered him rich gifts; but Elisha nobly refused them, that the Syrians might know, the servants of the *GOD of Israel* looked upon the wealth of this world with contempt. In order to repair his fault, in despising the waters of Jordan, Naaman desired to carry some of the *earth* of the land of Israel with him, thinking an altar of that would be most acceptable; or perhaps, intending to erect it in his own country as a monument of his cure, and to invite his countrymen to pay their adoration at it; but this request was not granted, because it proceeded from superstition. He now regretted that he had ever entered the temple of Rimmon, and was apprehensive his having done so was an unpardonable act; but the prophet desired him to go in peace; and he departed, in order to return to his own country *.

Gehazi

* Some of the learned are of opinion, that the text respecting Naaman's *bowing himself in the house of RIMMON*, is translated

Gehazi the servant of Elisha, thought that his master was very wrong in refusing the gifts which had been offered by the Syrian general; he therefore resolved to obtain them for himself, and ran with all possible speed after Naaman, whom he soon overtook, and told him, that some young men, sons of the prophets, were come to his master, who stood in need of assistance; and that Elisha requested he would send him two talents of silver, and two changes of garments: Naaman immediately complied with his demand, and Gehazi went back to his master, from whom he intended to conceal what he had done; but as this was an affair in which the honour of God was concerned, the LORD revealed it to Elisha; who, as soon as Gehazi entered the room, demanded where he had been; he replied, "*thy servant went no whither;*" on which Elisha said, "*went not my heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and to thy seed for ever: and Gehazi went out of his presence a leper as white as snow.*" Gehazi's crime certainly merited the judgment which was inflicted upon

wrong, and that it should have been rendered as follows: "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master WENT into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and HE LEANED on my hand, and I BOWED myself in the house of Rimmon: the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing: that I BOWED myself in the house of Rimmon." It is observed, that this construction seems best to agree with the rest of Naaman's discourse; may it not therefore be inferred from it, that this General never went by choice into the idol's temple, but worshipped in private the unknown God; who, as a reward for his good intentions, revealed himself to him in so gracious and wonderful a manner.

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him : this wicked servant was soon convinced that the HOLY GOD, whose spirit inspired Elisha, could not be deceived ; and that “ those who get wealth by fraud and injustice, cannot expect either the comfort or continuance of it.

“ The general instruction that may be collected from the history of Naaman is this, that no state of life is exempt from misfortune ; and that what we esteem the severest calamities, are often productive of the greatest benefits. Had Naaman enjoyed health, as well as honour and success ; had he had nothing to divide his attention but the triumphs of the field and the pleasures of the court, he might indeed have continued a favourite with his prince, and an idol of the people ; but he would ever have remained a stranger to his God.

“ There is nothing but religion that can make us truly honourable ; nothing but the favour of the SUPREME BEING that can make us truly happy.”

S E C T. VIII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JORAM
(OR JEHORAM) KING OF ISRAEL.

THEN the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, in such and such a place shall be my camp.

And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there not once nor twice.

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha the prophet, that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.

And

And he said, Go, and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

Therefore sent he thither horses and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold an host encompassed the city, both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas my master! how shall we do?

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man: and he saw: and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people I pray thee with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha.

And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city follow me,

60 ELISHA'S GENEROSITY.

and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

And it came to pass when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and behold they were in the midst of Samaria.

And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, Shall I smite them? shall I smite them?

And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is reason to suppose, that Naaman on his return to Syria, was removed from the command of the army, either for refusing to attend his sovereign into the temple of Rimmon; or from a suspicion that he
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would favour a people, in whose land he had received so extraordinary a mercy. The fame of Elisha, was doubtless spread amongst the Syrians by Naaman, and those who had been witnesses of his cure; and therefore it was natural for them to imagine, that this prophet was endued with such a degree of knowledge, as to be able to disconcert all the secret designs of Ben-hadad.

Elisha at this time resided at Dothan, which was not far from Samaria; the king of Syria was resolved to seize him, and therefore sent a great army to encompass the city, that he might not make his escape from any part of it. The prophet's servant being up early, was the first to observe them, and was greatly alarmed; but Elisha, who was already apprized of their motions by divine inspiration, received his intelligence with perfect serenity, knowing that he was guarded by a heavenly host; who we are told, in several parts of scripture, "*encamp about those that fear the LORD to deliver them.*" Mortal eyes indeed, cannot behold these heavenly guardians, unless opened by the miraculous power of God, as in the case of Elisha and his servant; but, as it is recorded in holy writ that they have been made visible to such chosen witnesses, we may safely believe the truth of their existence and ministry.

The same Almighty Being, who enlightened the eyes of the prophet and his attendant, darkened those of Ben-hadad's army: not that they were seized with actual blindness, but their senses and understandings were so confused, that they were unable to distinguish one thing from another. These persons had received command to go to the city where Elisha was, not merely

62 ELISHA'S TRIUMPH.

to Dothan, but without doubt to pursue him if he should escape to another place: the prophet therefore told them no *falsity*, when he said *that was NOT the city*, because he whom they sought was not then in it; and as the event proves that he had no ill design against them, he is acquitted of sin in leading them on to Samaria: if he had commanded the inhabitants to put them to the sword, he might perhaps have been accused of treachery; though I believe the practice of all nations towards their enemies, will justify his policy in thus deluding those who came with a design to destroy *him*, as a preparation to the destruction of *his country*.

It must have been a great surprize to the king of Israel, to behold the Syrian host thus conducted by Elisha into the midst of his capital; but as he perceived it was miraculous, he restrained his desire of cutting them off, and considering the prophet as his father and protector, gladly submitted to his direction.

Elisha, by the providence of God, gained a glorious triumph over his persecutors, and employed his advantage, even like a christian: his behaviour had a natural tendency to turn their hatred against Israel into esteem, and to convert them to the worship of Israel's God. It answered the purpose of putting an end to the intended war; for Ben-hadad was intimidated from pursuing his purpose, and made no more attempts to seize the person of Elisha in the land of Israel.

S E C T. IX.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF JORAM
(OR JEHORAM) KING OF ISRAEL.

AND it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up and besieged Samaria.

And there was a great famine in Samaria : and behold, they besieged it until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press ?

And the king said unto her, What aileth thee ? and she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow.

So we boiled my son, and did eat him : and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him : and she hath hid her son.

And

64 JORAM'S THREATNINGS.

And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and behold he had sackcloth within upon his flesh.

Then he said, God do so, and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

But Elisha sat in his house; and the elders sat with him: and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head! look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD: what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD, thus saith the LORD, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

Then

Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? and he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

And there were four leprous men at the entering in at the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: and if they save us alive we shall live: and if they kill us, we shall but die.

And they rose up in the twilight to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites,

66 THE SYRIANS' CONSTERNATION.

Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us.

Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence, silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings and we held our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

So they came, and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.

And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.

And

And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp, to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.

And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: Behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed) and let us send and see.

They took therefore two chariot-horses, and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go, and see.

And they went after them unto Jordan: and lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king.

And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures
of

68 THE DEATH OF THE UNBELIEVING LORD.

of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to-morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria.

And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be. And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Ben-hadad entertained an inveterate enmity towards Israel, and therefore his peaceable disposition was of short continuance; for the next year he resolved to renew his hostilities, and to besiege the city of Samaria itself; which he did so effectually, that the inhabitants were reduced to the utmost extremity of want, as

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we may judge from their paying the value of five pounds for an ass's head; and to the amount of twelve or fifteen shillings, for about three English pints of a coarse kind of corn or pulse, known then by the name of *dove's dung*, which perhaps it resembled in appearance; but we may form a juster idea of the miserable state of the Samaritans, from the shocking circumstance of a woman's eating her own child: Joram, though he appears to have been moved with compassion by this incident, was not properly affected with the judgment which the LORD had caused to fall on his kingdom; he did indeed, in compliance with the usual custom, in times of publick calamity, put sackcloth upon his flesh; but he did not, as the good Jehoshaphat had done, endeavour to gain pardon from the SUPREME BEING, by a general fast and humiliation; neither did he destroy the idols which still remained in the land of Israel: so far from having recourse to the prophet for his intercession with the LORD, he vehemently protested that he would immediately put Elisha to death as the cause of all this distress; repenting that he had followed his advice the preceding year, in sparing the Syrian army, when he had them in his power: his cruel design was, however, frustrated, by the interposition of Divine Providence; and Elisha informed the good men who were with him of the danger which threatened them, and entreated that they would detain the messenger till the king should arrive. It appears that Elisha was in expectation of directions from the LORD, what to say to the king of Israel; but as he did not receive any, and the case was perfectly clear to him, thought he might venture,

70 THE DELIVERANCE OF SAMARIA.

venture, without immediate inspiration, to declare to the messenger, that he was not the author of the calamity, for "*the thing was from the LORD.*" Elisha appears to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit immediately on the king's arrival, for he addressed himself to his sovereign in that solemn form of words which prophets made use of, as an introduction to their predictions when they spake by Divine authority: "*Hear ye the word of the LORD! Thus saith the LORD!*"

I need not enlarge on the miraculous deliverance which it pleased God to grant to the Samaritans, because we have had occasion to consider others of a similar nature. The terror of the Syrians was caused by some supernatural noise, which we cannot possibly describe; and therefore it is best not to indulge our minds in fruitless conjectures, on a point of no concern to *us*. I must, however, remark the wonderful deliverance of the lepers, and the importance of their intelligence.—They were cast out, and left by their countrymen to perish, because they were considered as *useless*; but the Lord, whose mercy is over all his works, took compassion on these miserable creatures, and made them instrumental to the relief of those who had so cruelly despised them!

We may understand from the king's suspicions of a stratagem to betray the city, that he did not believe the prediction of the prophet, otherwise he would have acted as Jehoshaphat did, when the Moabites invaded Judah. It appears, that the Samaritans had been under the necessity either of starving their horses for want of forage, or of eating them to satisfy their
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hunger; and that there were no more than five left in the city, two only of which were able to go on to the Syrian camp. It was not for the righteousness of the king, or the people in general, but for the sake of God's faithful servants, and in remembrance of the covenant with Jacob, that Israel was delivered. The proud nobleman who disbelieved the word of the LORD, had reason to repent his infidelity. "God's *justice was glorified, and the prediction of Elisha was fulfilled, for he saw the plenty, but did not live to taste it."

Though the city of Samaria, which had been so particularly distressed, was plentifully relieved, there seems to have been a general scarcity in the land of Israel; for we are told of a famine which lasted seven years; and there is reason to suppose, that Ben-hadad was permitted by the LORD to besiege the capital city at this time, in order to humble Joram, and bring him to a sense of his crimes, that he might put away idols, and exert his endeavours to reform his people from those sins for which the famine was inflicted: we have an account of several miracles performed by Elisha, most of which seem to have been wrought in this time of scarcity.

ELISHA MULTIPLIETH THE WIDOW'S OIL, &c.

A poor woman, widow of one of the sons of the prophets, was left with her children, in very indigent circumstances; for her husband, in his life time, had contracted debts, and did not leave behind him substance sufficient to discharge them; the creditors were inexorable, and insisted, that his two sons should be-

* Henry's Annotations.

come bondmen to them, for seven years, in order that by their service, the loss might be made good: the law which authorized them to do so, seems to have been made originally to deter the Israelites from living beyond their income; which no one would have had occasion to do, if all the ordinances of God had been observed in the land, because the allotted portion of each family, would have amply supplied their wants: but the revolutions which had happened, through the disobedience of the LORD's people, had altered the case, and numbers became poor by their own sin and folly, many by the oppression of others. You know in what manner Jezebel had persecuted the prophets; and there is some reason to suppose, that the poverty of this woman's husband, might be the consequence of that queen's tyranny; however it was, the man had feared the LORD, and therefore his widow and children had a claim to the DIVINE MERCY; because God had graciously promised "*to be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow.*" The regular method of access to God in Israel at that time, was by his prophets; the poor woman therefore, hastened to make known to Elisha her distressful situation, resolving to follow his directions in every particular. She had nothing in her house but a little pot of oil, and that her creditors had a right to seize: Elisha therefore commanded her to borrow a large number of vessels from her neighbours, and then to shut the door upon her and her sons, to prevent interruption; they did so, and received a most miraculous increase; the oil continued to flow, till all the vessels were full, and then stayed. The widow immediately sold a part

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of it, and discharged all her husband's debts; the remainder she disposed of in the support of herself and children, till they were able to procure an honest livelihood by their own industry. The remarks we lately made on the history of the widow of Zerapheth, may be applied on the present occasion; and therefore I will now proceed to relate,

THE HISTORY OF THE SHUNAMITE.

In the city of Shunam, which was in the road between Samaria and mount Carmel, lived a woman, who was rich, and of a most amiable disposition: she observed, that Elisha frequently travelled that way, and occasionally invited him to take refreshment at her house; perceiving, from the sanctity of his life and conversation, that he was a man of God, she proposed to her husband, to prepare an apartment for him, and furnish it with necessaries for his use: the prophet received the obligation at her hands, with grateful respect, and wished to return it in the most acceptable manner.

As she feared the LORD, and believed his prophets, she already enjoyed the favour of God: Elisha therefore desired to know, whether he could do her or her husband any service with the king or the captain of the host (as he was at that time high in the favour of his sovereign;) but she had learnt to set bounds to her desires, and having the means of living suitably to her rank in life, declined his generous offer; thinking it safer and more agreeable, to live amongst those friends whose society she had long been accustomed to, than to enter on a new scene, merely for the gratification of

ambitious views, which when indulged, are generally found insatiable. The prophet could not but approve her wise moderation, but the desire of obliging her yet remained; and he at length discovered, by his servant's information, that she regretted the want of children; he therefore prayed to the LORD to send her a son, and acquainted the woman that this blessing would be granted: she could scarcely believe the prophet; however, when the promise was fulfilled, she received the child with joy, and reared him with tenderness: but scarcely had she brought him through the first stage of infancy, when he was taken ill in the field, and brought back to his mother, on whose knees he soon expired. The Shunamite immediately hastened to find Elisha, and when she came into his presence, threw herself in an agony of grief at his feet; Gehazi, who then attended him, thinking this action would displease his master, would have thrust her away, but the prophet judging that some great distress agitated her mind, prevented him, and she was left at liberty to declare the cause of her sorrow; which she did, in affecting remonstrances with Elisha, for procuring her a blessing she had never asked of him, and which it would have been better, she thought, never to have known, than to be deprived of it so soon. The good old man was extremely affected with her loss, and went, with all the speed he could, to Shunam; he ascended into the chamber where the dead child lay, and throwing himself upon the body, offered up the most fervent prayers, that it would please the LORD to restore the soul: his petition was granted, and the tender mother once more embraced her little darling, dearer to her heart than ever!

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DEADLY POTTAGE CURED. 75

This transaction is supposed to have happened a short time after the deliverance of the kings of Israel, Judah and Edom, from the Moabites; but I reserved it till now, because the sequel of the story is related in this part of the history of the kings of Israel, where we are told, that Elisha warned the Shunamite to go with her household into some other country, that she might escape the miseries of the famine which was coming on Israel; she accordingly took his advice, and resided amongst the Philistines till plenty was restored to her native land: her possessions had been seized upon during her absence, and when she returned and found them in the hands of another, she went to court in order to solicit the king for a restoration of them: Joram happened at that instant to be conversing with Gehazi, formerly the servant of Elisha, concerning the miracles performed by this prophet. Gehazi recollected her person, and informed his majesty that she was the very woman whose child had been raised to life again by Elisha's intercession; and the king readily granted her request; which, but for this accident, she might have had great difficulty to obtain; he likewise gave orders that she should receive all the arrears.

DEADLY POTTAGE MADE WHOLESOME BY THE HAND OF ELISHA.

The sons of the prophets were assembled at Gilgal, in order to receive instructions from Elisha; there was at that time so great a scarcity of provisions, that Elisha could procure nothing for the repast of his friends but a pottage of such herbs as the fields afforded; and even these were so difficult to obtain, that the person

76 ELISHA'S LIBERALITY.

who was sent to collect them, was tempted to supply the deficiency with a kind of wild gourd, which he knew not to be of a pernicious quality, but supposed it wholesome from the resemblance it bore to a fruit he had been accustomed to eat, and therefore put it with the rest into the broth: no sooner did they taste of this poisonous dish, than they discovered their danger, and exclaimed with affright, that "*there was death in the pot!*" Elisha called for a handful of meal, which, by the particular blessing of God, cured the bad taste, and prevented any ill effects from the potage, which all present then partook of with pleasure and safety.

AN HUNDRED MEN MIRACULOUSLY FED.

Whilst this good prophet Elisha remained at Gilgal, a present was brought him of twenty barley loaves, said to be of the FIRST-FRUITS, which were, by the law of Moses, dedicated to God; and therefore the pious person who brought this acceptable supply, could not have disposed of it more agreeably to the divine institution, than by devoting it to the relief of God's prophet. When Elisha received this present he had a hundred men with him, to each of whom doubtless a portion of it was desirable, but they had no right to claim it. Elisha was of a compassionate and liberal disposition, therefore did not desire to appropriate it to himself; on the contrary, wished to divide to all a share, trusting that Divine Providence would supply his future wants. The goodness of the LORD favoured his benevolent purpose, and he was assured that the bread should be miraculously increased; he then com-

manded

manded his servant *to set the loaves before the men that they might eat*, they were surprized at his words; but the event justified Elisha's hopes, for the hundred men eat of the twenty loaves and were not only satisfied, but even an overplus remained.

IRON CAUSED TO SWIM.

The sons, (or disciples) of the prophets increased in number, so that the place of their residence would not contain them all; they therefore applied to Elisha for permission to build another dwelling, and intreated that he would accompany them to the banks of Jordan, in order to enjoy the advantage of his advice and direction, whilst they were making the requisite preparations. They proposed to erect a very humble edifice, being possessed of no riches to pay either for materials or workmen, and therefore each man agreed to contribute his labour in cutting trees and forming them into beams and planks; nay, so great was their poverty, that some of them could not even purchase proper tools, but borrowed of their neighbours. As they were proceeding in their work, one of them unfortunately lost the iron part of his axe in the water, which distressed him exceedingly, because, being of an honest principle, it was his intention to have returned it to the owner, who might now be put to inconvenience by the loss of it, and suspect his integrity; he therefore expressed his sorrow for the accident in pathetic terms to Elisha, "*Alas! master, for it was borrowed.*" The loss of an axe to us who can so easily procure such an utensil, appears very trifling; but when we consider, that no tree can be felled without tools, that it is not

78. IRON MADE TO SWIM.

improbable the owner of this axe might get his own livelihood and provide for a family by cutting timber; that the young man who borrowed it was by the loss rendered useless to his society, and could not claim an apartment without assisting in the building; and above all, that his reputation was at stake, and even the honour of God concerned; that disgrace should not be brought on religion by an appearance of fraud, in one who professed to be in a particular manner devoted to his service; when we consider all this, my dear, we cannot wonder, that Elisha should think his disciple's distress deserving of his intercession; he therefore implored the divine aid, and commanded the young man to throw a stick into the river; on his doing which, the iron axe swam on the water, and he seized it with joy and thankfulness.

I think we may consider this incident as a proof, that God will assist and reward those who are honest and industrious, not by miracles indeed, for they have ceased, but frequently by the most unexpected means.

W. W. W. S E C T.

Because I know the evil
that

S E C T. X.

BEN-HADAD'S MESSAGE TO ELISHA.

AND Elisha came to Damascus, and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick, and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.

And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover; howbeit, the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die.

And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.

And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? and he answered, Because I know the evil

that thou wilt doun to the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women.

And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing? and Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.

So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? and he answered, He told me that thou shouldest surely recover?

And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died. And Hazael reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We are not told, my dear, for what purpose Elisha went to Damascus, but may conclude it was by divine appointment. It appears strange, that Ben-hadad, who had hitherto been so inveterate against the prophet, should wish to consult him in his illness; but I think the honour and respect he paid him at this time, shew, that he was convinced his late defeat was an act of omnipotent power, and his illness another judgment from the same Almighty hand; and therefore it

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is likely, he imagined the prophet could inform him, what would be the event of his disease.

Hazael, who was sent with the present to Elisha, is supposed to have succeeded Naaman in the command of the army; he was the person whom Elijah had received command to anoint king of Syria; but for some reason, with which we are not acquainted, he did not do so; nor does it appear to have been done by Elisha.

The prophet knew, by *divine inspiration*, not only that Hazael would be sovereign of Syria, and in course of time bring great miseries upon Israel; but seems to have been acquainted also, with the means by which he would ascend the throne; for when he had informed Hazael, "*that Ben-hadad might recover, but would surely die;*" he fixed his eye steadfastly on him, till Hazael, confounded with the thoughts that his treacherous design against his king were known to the prophet, was *ashamed*; and Elisha, shocked with the view which the LORD gave him of the future calamities that would fall upon Israel, wept; which occasioned Hazael to enquire the meaning of his extraordinary emotion: "*It is because I know* (replied the holy man) *the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel!*"

Hazael was not only offended at the prophet's suggestions, but surprized that he should think him such a monster; for though he might intend to prevent his king's recovery, he did not then suppose that he should ever be capable of committing such horrid barbarities, as could only be practised by those who have lost every principle of humanity. Elisha then informed him,

82 AFFLICTION AND PROSPERITY.

this wickedness would be the consequence of his being king of Syria. Happy would it have been for Hazael as well as for Israel, if this prediction had induced him to examine his own heart, and endeavour to nip in the bud, that fatal ambition, which already tempted him to lift his murderous hand against his sovereign! But you find he informed Ben-hadad, that Elisha said he should certainly recover, and then seized the first opportunity of putting him to death, in so private a manner, that it was never even suspected by the Syrians; for they would scarcely have raised to the throne one whom they knew to be the assassin of a monarch, worthy, in their opinion, to be worshipped as a deity, after his death.

In this passage of sacred history, we have two remarkable instances of the influence which affliction and prosperity have on the mind. Ben-hadad, who, when he supposed himself able to command the prophet of the LORD, and conquer all nations, treated Elisha with insult, oppression, and contempt: reduced now to the bed of languishment, he found himself a poor helpless creature; and (recollecting, we may suppose, the cure of Naaman) humbled himself, to court the favour of the prophet by valuable presents, in hopes that he might be induced to recover him also; or at least, to acquaint him with his fate; but, as he did not discover any signs of repentance and conversion, he had no right to expect comfort or intercession from the *man of God*; and the time was now come, when he was to receive the reward of his own arrogance and impiety, by falling a victim to the ambition of another.

Hazael,

Hazael, whilst he was a subject, seems to have been generally esteemed; for we learn, that he was honoured with the confidence of his prince; and it appears that he was a favourite of the people, since he was, without opposition, chosen to be king of Syria: from whence we may conclude, his conduct had been just and upright: and a sense of rectitude remained strongly impressed on his mind, even when Elisha warned him of the danger of aspiring to the throne: but it is plain he did not know *himself*; for when he became possessed of power, he verified the predictions of the prophet in every particular.

This history teaches us, that it is very dangerous to indulge ambitious views, since no one can possibly foresee the guilt they may incur in the execution of them. It instructs us also, to be contented in that station wherein God has placed us, since we have reason to suppose it is the properest for us; we are likewise admonished to *commit our ways unto the Lord*, and intreat him to assist us by his grace, in the government of our passions, since they are too apt to lead us into danger and sin.

82 AFFLICTION AND PROSPERITY.

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S E C T. XI.

THE REIGN OF JEHORAM KING OF JUDAH.

NOW Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah. All these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.

And their father gave them great gifts of silver and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he was the first-born.

Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel.

Howbeit, the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king.

Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots.

So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time also did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers.

Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit idolatry, and compelled Judah thereto.

And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD GOD of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,

But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem like the house of Ahab,
and

and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself:

Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods.

And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.

Moreover, the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians.

And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons.

And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease.

And it came to pass that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers.

Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem
eight

eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit, they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In order to connect the history of Judah, it will be necessary, my dear, to read over again, before we proceed, the section which contains the latter part of the reign of king Jehoshaphat*.

Jehoram, had borne a share in the government with his father for four years before the death of Jehoshaphat; you have already read, that he was married to Ahab's daughter; and now you are informed of the unhappy consequences of this improper alliance; for we may conclude, that it was at the instigation of Athaliah, that Jehoram slew his brethren, and introduced the worship of Baal again into Jerusalem.

It was natural to expect, that the judgments of God would follow this wickedness; and accordingly you find, the Edomites refused to pay the usual tribute, and set up a king of their own: this revolt completed the prediction of Isaac, *that Esau's posterity should shake off the yoke of Jacob*; which they did so effectually, that the Jews entirely lost their dominion over them. Libnah also threw off its allegiance, and the Philistines and Arabians ravaged the country, plundered the king's palace, and even carried away his wives and children.

It is not easy to account for Elijah's sending a writing to Jehoram: it is supposed that the word Elifha,

* Sect. viii.

should

88 GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO DAVID.

should be put instead of Elijah. You find that this wicked king was permitted to reign but a short time, and his death was evidently a judgment for his sins, since the manner of it agreed exactly with the prophet's prediction.

I beg, my dear, "you will remark, in the preservation of one of the king's sons, the gracious care of God, for perpetuating the kingdom of Judah and the house of David, in remembrance of his covenant."

It certainly was for David's sake, that such wicked kings were endured: for many generations his name, by a succession of monarchs, descended from him, was kept up bright and illustrious, as a lamp is kept burning by a constant supply of fresh oil; and you will find, that even when the king and people of Judah had so highly provoked the LORD, that he suffered them to be carried away from their own land, the name of David was still honoured, by promises of future and everlasting glory, through a prince, descended from him: and his family was preserved, and his tribe had the pre-eminence till the coming of the Messiah.

We are told that Jehoram *died without being desired*; by which we may understand, that he was hated by his people, who neither wished for his life, nor lamented his death.

S E C T. XII.

THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH (CALLED ALSO * AZARIAH AND † JEHOAHAZ) KING OF JUDAH.

AND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah Jehoram's youngest son king in his stead. For the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp, had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned.

Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly.

Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The history of king Ahaziah is so interwoven with that of Joram king of Israel, that it is difficult to separate them. He is said to have been forty-two years

* 2 Chron. xxii. 6. † 2 Chron. xxi. 17. and xxv. 23.

old when he began to reign, but this he could not be according to his father's age ; it is therefore supposed by the learned, that there is some error in transcribing this passage, and that he was only twenty-two years old.

Notwithstanding his life was preserved by the particular providence of God, when all his brethren were slain, he suffered himself to be influenced by bad counsel and example to do wickedly : one would have supposed that the heavy judgments which had so lately been inflicted on his father, would have made some impression on the mind of Ahaziah ; but he seems to have been a confirmed idolater, and to have been educated in an habitual defiance and hatred of the LORD, from his very infancy.

We must now return to the history of the kings of Israel.

S E C T. XIII.

THE REIGN OF JEHU KING OF ISRAEL—THE
DEATHS OF JEZEBEL, JORAM KING OF IS-
RAEL, AND AHAZIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND Ahaziah king of Judah went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians wounded Joram.

And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead.

And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber.

Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have

have anointed thee king over Israel: then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

So the young man, even the young man the prophet went to Ramoth-gilead.

And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? and he said, To thee, O captain.

And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel.

And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish.

And I will make the race of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah.

And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door and fled.

Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? and he said unto them, Ye know the man and his communication.

And they said, It is false: tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.

Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

So Jehu the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram, and Jehu said, If it be your minds let none go forth nor escape out of the city to go tell it in Jezreel.

So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel: for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram.

And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace?

So

So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? and Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? and Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? and he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?

And

And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah.

And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Joram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. For remember how that when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him ;

Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD ; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD.

But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house, and Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there.

And

And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.

And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace who slew his master?

And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? and there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot.

And when he was come in he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter.

And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

Wherefore they came again and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.

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And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan.

And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.

But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD GOD of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short; and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel;

From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead, and Bashan.

And Jehu slept with his fathers ; and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.

And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“ Ramoth-gilead * was a place of long dispute between Israel and Syria ; Jehoram had lately had an engagement with Hazael king of Syria not far from it, wherein he had received some very dangerous wounds, and was gone down to Jezreel to be cured of them. His army, however, continued the siege, under the command of Jehu ; who, in the king’s absence acted as captain-general.”

Jehu seems to have had no previous intimation of his appointment to the throne of Israel ; neither do we read that he had any intention to raise a conspiracy against his sovereign ; but when commanded by God, it was his duty to obey. It is very shocking to read of such a dreadful massacre ; but if we recollect the great number of just and innocent persons, who had been put to death by the house of Ahab in defiance of God HIMSELF, we cannot but acknowledge the justice of the Supreme Being, in bringing such judgments upon them ;—especially as he had caused his prophet Elijah to warn them that he should do so, unless they repented.

Jezebel, and the whole house of Ahab, were confirmed idolaters, notwithstanding the LORD had gra-

* Stackhouse;

ciously employed various means to convert them : they had been afflicted with adversity to humble their minds ; prophets had been sent, and miracles wrought, to deliver them from distress, yet they hardened their hearts ; and as their numbers increased, would, if they had been suffered to live, have corrupted many, who were now instructed by the miserable fate of these sinners, to persevere in the worship of the LORD.

I need not comment on the justice of Jezebel's fate, for I am sure it must strike your own mind. The prophecy of Elijah was literally fulfilled in every respect. Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. It is supposed, that those who had the care of the young princes, fled with them from Jezreel to that city, thinking they would be safest in the capital : but it appears, that Jehu wrote letters to the rulers of that place, saying, "*as you have your master's sons with you, also chariots and horses, and are in a fenced city, set up one of them for a king, and fight for your master's house :*" these letters were ironical ; for he could not suppose they would venture, in the present situation of affairs, to set up one of Ahab's sons in competition with him, who was proceeding, with so much impetuosity, to destroy the house of Ahab ; they were therefore greatly intimidated, and returned him for answer, "*that they would do that which was good in his eyes ;*" on which he wrote them a second letter, requiring them to bring the head of their master's sons to him in Jezreel : they were easily induced, for their own safety, to become themselves, the executioners of the young princes ; "*those † who have been false to their God, are soon*

† Henry's Annotations.

persuaded to be false to their friends ;” and they accordingly slew them all, and sent their heads in baskets to Jezreel, which Jehu commanded to be laid in two heaps at the entering of the gate, till the morning; when, addressing himself to the rulers of Jezreel, he justified, from their action, his own treatment of the other persons in Ahab’s family; for if the guardians of the young princes were *blameless* for killing so many persons *by his order*, surely *he* was not to be condemned for what he had done by *divine command*.

Jehu then proceeded to slay the rest of Ahab’s house, till he left none remaining in Jezreel: pursuing his way to Samaria, he met some of the brethren of Ahaziah, amounting to forty persons, who were going to visit the children of the king and the queen of Israel; these he killed also, for they were justly included in the destruction of this wicked race; as their father had entered into so intimate an alliance with Ahab’s family, and imitated him in some of his worst crimes—they are supposed to have been some of Athaliah’s relations.

Jehu next resolved to cut off all the worshippers of Baal; for this purpose he caused a solemn assembly to be called, and commanded every one to attend, saying, “*Ahab served Baal a little, but I will serve him much.*” When they were all collected in the idol’s temple, he gave orders to eighty men who were without, to put them, without reserve, to the sword; and then brake down the image, and destroyed the house.

Jonadab the son of Rechab, was a pious good man, who lived a retired life; being well acquainted with the prophecies against Ahab’s house, he imputed Jehu’s

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JEHU'S IMPETUOSITY. 101

conduct to zeal for the LORD, and therefore went to meet him, and gave him countenance.

Jehu seems to have been so intoxicated with the power which God had put into his hands, that he did not stop to consider.—So he could but establish himself on the throne, to which the destruction of Ahab's race, and Baal's worshippers was necessary, he would not stop at any *means*; and it must be acknowledged, that his behaviour to the latter, was treacherous and false: neither was he *commissioned* to cut them off in *that manner*; for, as he was king, he might have caused false worshippers to be put to death by the hands of justice, in a regular way, especially as he would have been defended from opposition by divine power.

Jehu was a man of a furious temper, and therefore a proper instrument for the execution of divine vengeance: if Israel had continued faithful to the LORD, or would have hearkened to the warnings of the prophets, this violent man would never have had the power to oppress them; but as they were obdurate, it pleased God to raise him up for their chastisement.

That the world might learn, and Jehu himself remember, that Ahab's race were devoted to destruction for their sins, he received the approbation of the LORD, for the punctual execution of the divine command, with a promise that his family should continue on the throne for four generations: one would suppose, that this would have encouraged him to propagate the worship of the LORD, but we find that he retained the worship of the golden calves: for these abominations he was punished with an unquiet reign;

and his subjects, afflicted for their sins by Hazael, the cruel king of Syria, who turned his arms against them, and is supposed, at this time, to have practised some of those barbarities predicted by the prophet Elisha.

Jehu is thought to have defended his country from its invaders, with great spirit and skill; but the records of his reign, which are said to have been written in the chronicles of the kings of Israel, are lost; and therefore it is impossible to obtain farther particulars.

I am sure you will be able to distinguish the faults in Jehu's conduct; and I think will not impute them to the command of God, as he certainly might have destroyed the family of Ahab, assisted as he was, by Almighty power, without employing either deceit or treachery: he might also have secured his own prosperity, if his behaviour had been thoroughly consistent with his duty, as king of Israel, and servant of the LORD JEHOVAH.

S E C T.

S E C T. XIV.

THE REIGN OF ATHALIAH QUEEN OF JUDAH.

AND when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed royal.

But Jehoshabeath the daughter of the king took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not.

And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; a third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house that it be not broken down.

And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king.

And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain. And be ye with the king as he goeth out, and as he cometh in.

And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the LORD.

And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king,
from

from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD.

And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets. And Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried Treason, treason.

But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges; and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

And they laid hands on her, and she went by the way, by the which the horses came into the king's house, and there was she slain.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We have, in this section, another instance of the faithfulness of the Supreme Being, in the wonderful preservation of Joash.

It is quite shocking to read of the fury of Athaliah, and the dreadful massacre she caused; but women who give themselves up to *impiety* and *immorality*, become a prey to tumultuous passions, and commit actions which those who conduct themselves by the rules of religion, shudder even to hear of. How happy might she have been, had she served God, and educated her children in a proper way; then would the blessing of the LORD have been secure to them, and she would have had no cause to deplore their miserable end.

When Jehoiada thought it time to produce the young king, he concerted with the principal persons in the kingdom for this purpose; they joyfully acquiesced in his proposal, took an oath of fidelity to Joash, and managed things with such secrecy and dispatch, that every point was accomplished before Athaliah had the least intimation of their design: as soon as she heard the acclamations of the people she was terrified, and ran with haste to the Temple from whence the noise proceeded, and soon found that it was too late to prevent the ruin that threatened her, for she was immediately put to the sword, and received the reward of her impiety and usurpation. Every one must discern the justice of God in the punishment of this wicked queen, and the preservation of Joash.

S E C T. XV.

THE REIGN OF JOASH (CALLED ALSO JEHOASH)
KING OF JUDAH.

JOASH was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibeah of Beer-sheba.

And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.

And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.

(For the sons of Athaliah that wicked woman had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim.)

So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.

And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.

Yet he sent prophets to them to bring them again unto the LORD, and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.

Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it.

Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

And

THE DEATH OF JOASH. 109

And Joash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria; and he went away from Jerusalem.

And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD GOD of their fathers: so they executed judgment against Joash.

And when they were departed from him (for they left him in great diseases) his own servants conspired against him, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed; and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.

A N N O-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joash was extremely fortunate in the beginning of his reign, in being under the direction of so good and pious a man as Jehoida, for both he and his subjects experienced the happy effects of his excellent management; whilst Joash continued under his influence, he appeared wise and amiable, and the blessing of the LORD attended him; but as soon as he suffered himself to be perverted from the worship of the LORD, his happiness and prosperity forsook him, for *wrath came upon him from the LORD*; and the Syrians were permitted to prevail against him.

You already know the character of Hazael, and therefore may easily imagine the miseries which Judah endured, by falling into his cruel hands; yet they could not justly reproach God for raising them up such an enemy, as he would undoubtedly have been restrained from hurting them, (as he was during the life of Jehoida) if they had not provoked the divine chastisement by their apostacy.

Nothing could be a greater insult to the LORD, than the murder of the prophet Zechariah, whom they stoned whilst he was declaring the *word of the LORD*, in a place always deemed sacred, the court of the Temple. This wickedness was too notorious to escape the vengeance of God.

How does every portion of sacred history exemplify the *truth, justice, wisdom, and goodness* of the SUPREME BEING!

S E C T. XVI.

THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ KING OF ISRAEL.

IN the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehohaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin : he departed not therefrom.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.

And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him : for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz, but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen : for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

And

And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as before-time.

Nevertheless, they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.

And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoash his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How shocking is it to read of the degeneracy of Israel! When we compare their abject condition in the days of Jehoahaz, with their glory and eminence in the reigns of David and Solomon, one can scarcely believe it to be the same nation which was chosen as the peculiar people of GOD. Whilst they continued faithful to him, the LORD Himself “*was their defence, and the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency:*” when they forsook him they were stripped of their honour, and exposed to the insults of their neighbours; yet did not the LORD forget *His Covenant*, for when they returned unto Him with true contrition, he never rejected their prayers; a remarkable instance of which we have in the history of Jehoahaz, who was rescued from utter destruction by a miraculous deliverance, at a time when Hazael had gained such advantages, that
had

had he not been restrained by *omnipotent power*, he would have entirely *extirpated* the kingdom of Israel; but though he was permitted to succeed against this people, on account of their sins; yet could the same ALMIGHTY BEING who ruleth the raging of the ocean, restrain the turbulent passions of this haughty monarch, and say to him “*hitherto shalt thou go and no farther.*”

Let this instance encourage those who have forsaken the LORD, to turn unto him, who will have mercy upon them.

S E C T. XVII.

THE REIGN OF JEHOASH (CALLED ALSO JOASH)
KING OF ISRAEL.

IN the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah, began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD : he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin ; but he walked therein.

Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died ; and Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it : and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot.

And

And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek till thou have consumed them.

And he said Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

And it came to pass as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto

unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead.

And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war, three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoash continued the abominations which Jeroboam had fatally introduced into Israel, and in that respect did evil in the sight of the LORD: yet he had a great personal respect for the prophet Elisha, and I think it appears, revered the LORD *in some degree*, though he did not serve Him with a *perfect heart*.

Elisha

ELISHA'S LAST PROPHECY. 117

Elisha lived to an advanced age; it was about sixty years since he had been called to the prophetic office by Elijah; and though we do not read of his having been employed by God in any particular service for a long time, it is most likely he continued his admonitions, and had performed some good offices for Israel, or Jehoash would not have addressed him in those endearing words which Elisha himself made use of when Elijah was taken from him; "*my father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!*" Perhaps Elisha was the *saviour* whom the LORD is said to have raised up to deliver them, by his intercessions and prayers, out of the hands of the Syrians; this opinion is confirmed by Elisha's last action in the character of a prophet, he gave the king great assurances of success against the Syrians, and encouraged him to prosecute the war with vigour, and to animate him gave him a sign that he was commissioned to attack them, with a promise of success. "*It is,*" said Elisha, "*the arrow of the LORD's deliverance, even the arrow of deliverance from Syria.*" The prophet having in God's name, assured him of victory over the Syrians, proved him by another sign, whether he would pursue them with more zeal than Ahab had done: this was the meaning of his bidding him "*strike with the arrow on the ground;*" as much as to say, "*believe * them brought to the ground by the arrow of the LORD, given into your hand; now let me see how you will improve these advantages.*" The king shewed not that eagerness and warmth that might have been expected, but *smote thrice and no more*: perhaps he contemned

* Henry's Annotations.

118 A REMARKABLE MIRACLE.

the sign, and distrusted the prophet; and there is reason to suppose, that it was to confirm the truth of Elisha's being divinely inspired, that the miracle we read of after the account of his death, was performed: many of the Israelites might have represented Elisha as an *impostor*, and thrown aspersions on his memory; this miracle therefore, served to *establish his reputation* as a PROPHET, and to give the people confidence in respect to the conquest of the Syrians, which he had predicted. Elijah, you know, was honoured by the translation of *his BODY to heaven*; Elisha was filled with the same HOLY SPIRIT that had before inspired his master, and followed the example of his fidelity to GOD; therefore the LORD honoured *his BODY also in the sight of the world*, but in a different way, by making it (after his own soul was departed from it) an *instrument of DIVINE POWER*, in restoring life to a dead man. You must not suppose, my dear, that there was any *inherent virtue* in the *remains* of Elisha, more than in those of another man: DIVINE INSPIRATION did not alter *the nature* of PROPHETS, whose bodies were still subject to *diseases and decay*, and their minds liable to *passions and sin*; excepting when they were miraculously *sustained and illuminated*, by the *particular interposition* of the SUPREME BEING, what they said or did in the *name of the LORD*, was entirely *unpremeditated*; they were no farther HOLY than as they were *sacred*, or *set apart* for the service of GOD, and lived agreeably to their holy appointment; yet on these accounts they were justly revered, and for the good offices they performed for the world, they were entitled to *esteem*. A farther use may be made of this miracle, by consider-

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ing it as a proof of the immortality of the soul; but this we need not attend to here, because we shall find still better evidence as we proceed.

You have already read, in the history of the kings of JUDAH, that Hazael invaded that country, and even thought to attempt Jerusalem, but was diverted from his purpose by gifts of the treasures of the LORD's House; which Joash, the king who at that time reigned over Judah, was induced to make him through fear.

“ Hazael * having thus subdued and tyrannized over the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, died, and his infatuated people paid divine honours to his memory.”

Though Hazael was a great *monarch*, he must have been an unhappy *man*; for it is impossible that a mind like his, perpetually hurried by tumultuous passions, should know the invaluable blessing of inward peace and satisfaction.

He left behind him a son and successor, named Ben-hadad, who suffered a total reverse of his father's fortune. Jehoash king of Israel defeated him thrice, as Elisha had predicted, and recovered from him all that Hazael had taken from Israel. Jehoash is supposed to have divided the government of the kingdom with his son Jeroboam, for the last ten years of his reign.

* Universal History.

S E C T. XVIII.

THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AMAZIAH was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.

Now it came to pass when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father :

But he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

Moreover, Amaziah gathered Judah together ; and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin : and he numbered them from twenty years old and above,

above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield.

He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver.

But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee, for the LORD is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim.

But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong for the battle: GOD shall make thee fall before the enemy: for GOD hath power to help, and to cast down.

And Amaziah said to the man of GOD, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? and the man of GOD answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this.

Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley.

of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

And other ten thousand left alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they were broken all in pieces.

But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?

And it came to pass as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made
of

of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten? then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face.

And Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldst thou meddle to thine hurt that thou shouldst fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?

But Amaziah would not hear: for it came of God that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they fought after the gods of Edom.

So Jehoash the king of Israel went up; and they saw one another in the face, both he

and Amaziah king of Judah at Beth-she-mesh, which belongeth to Judah.

And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent.

And Jehoash the king of Israel, took Amaziah king of Judah the son of Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz at Beth-she-mesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

And he took all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.

Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there.

And

And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Amaziah had lately seen such severe judgments inflicted upon his father Joash, for his apostacy, that he was intimidated from following idols. He worshipped the true God, and kept up the Temple service, but *he had not a perfect heart*; from which we may understand, “that* he was not a man of serious piety himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was not an enemy, but a cool and indifferent friend.”

It was Amaziah’s duty to call his father’s murderers to account; for though they intended to avenge the death of the prophet Zechariah, they were not authorized to kill their sovereign.

You read, my dear, in the history of Jehoram king of Judah, that the Edomites (who from the days of David had been governed by a deputy) revolted, and set up a king of their own. Amaziah resolved to attempt reducing them; and thinking his own army insufficient†, resolved to hire auxiliaries. The proper step for him to have taken in such a case, would have been to consult a prophet of the LORD. That he might not run headlong into destruction, a prophet was, notwithstanding his neglect, graciously sent to warn him of the danger of an alliance with Israel, and

* Henry’s Annotations.
were four times as many.

† In the days of Jehoshaphat there

126 AMAZIAH'S CRUELTY.

he dismissed the troops. You find, my dear, his obedience was rewarded with success against the Edomites.

Why God permitted the Israelites to commit such devastations, in their return home, we are not told; but may suppose that the inhabitants of the cities in Judah, who were thus given up to their rage, were idolaters.

It is shocking to read of Amaziah's cruelty to the Edomites, and not easy to be accounted for in so *mixed* a character; what he did on his return, was *evidently a great act of sin and folly*; yet the goodness of the LORD was still extended towards him, but he was deaf to the kind remonstrances of the prophet, and therefore we cannot wonder at the adversity which afterwards befel him.

By whom he was advised to shew resentment to the king of Israel, for the devastations his subjects had made, we are not told; but they proved to be evil counsellors. Jehoash * had by this time gained the three victories over the Syrians, foretold by the prophet Elisha, which had doubtless elated him, he therefore could not forbear expressing the utmost contempt at Amaziah's arrogant challenge. The answer he returned was couched in the most scornful and mortifying terms; under the allegory of a despicable thistle, which having aspired to an alliance with the noble cedar, had, for its ambition, been crushed under the feet of a wild beast; he concluded with advising Amaziah to rest contented with his late petty victories, and not to suffer his ambition to drive him into desperate at-

* Universal History.

tempts, which would, most likely, end in the total loss of his kingdom.

Josephus, an ancient Jewish author, informs us, that Amaziah's army was seized with a sudden terror, and turned their backs on Israel, without striking one stroke, and left their king to the mercy of the conqueror, who led him prisoner to Jerusalem; where he obliged him to purchase his freedom, at the expence of all the gold and silver which were found, either in the Temple or his own treasury: after which, having demolished a part of the city wall, and taken hostages, he returned to Samaria.

As for Amaziah, though he out-lived his disgrace about fifteen years, we do not read that he performed any memorable action; but continuing to follow idolatrous practices, the favour of the LORD was totally withdrawn from him, and he fell by the hands of his own subjects, and his corpse was treated with indignity, but at length buried with his ancestors.

S E C T. XIX.

THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM THE SECOND, KING
OF ISRAEL.

IN the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Jehoash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years.

He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-heper.

For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Jehoash.

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

For

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS. 129

For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there :

But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el ; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son ; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit ;

And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel : I will not again pass by them any more.

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail.

The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and

it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned as by the flood of Egypt.

And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation, and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head: and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the North even to the East they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; and the manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

Behold the eyes of the LORD God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

For

For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the reign of this king is long, the history of it is related in few words. Jeroboam was a very valiant and politic prince, and God enabled him, *for the sake of the race of Jacob*, to work great deliverances for Israel, and to restore this kingdom to splendor and power. You find he took the city of Damascus (which was the capital of Syria) and Hamath, both which formerly belonged to Judah; besides a vast extent of country. The particulars of these valiant exploits are unknown to us, having been written in the annals of the kings of Israel, long since lost.

Jeroboam, in respect to his religious principles, was an idolater, for it is said that he walked in the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat; and we are told, that Amaziah, a priest of Beth-el, when he reprov'd the prophet Amos for prophesying *in the name of the LORD*, called the temple of the golden calf, *the king's chapel*.

“ After * the death of Elisha, it pleas'd the LORD to raise up a succession of prophets in Israel and Judah, to give them instructions and exhortations, and to denounce his threatnings against them upon their persisting in impiety; and these he appointed, not only to

* Stackhouse.

132 THE PROPHETS JONAH AND JOEL.

warn them by word of mouth (as his former prophets had done) but to commit their admonitions to writing, that posterity might see the ingratitude of his people, and all nations, from their crimes and punishment, learn not to do so wickedly."

In the reign of Jeroboam the second lived Jonah and Amos; the former is mentioned in this section, as having foretold the king's success against Hameth, &c. I shall shortly give you the history of this prophet.

Joel invited the people to repentance, and promised mercy and forgiveness to those who would listen to his admonitions. - He prophesied of A TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS whom GOD was to send, and of the HOLY SPIRIT, which he was to pour out upon *all flesh*; and in the conclusion of his writings, he declared what mercies GOD would bestow upon his church in the times of the gospel. You have in this section read, that Amos was a shepherd; and I have introduced a part of his prophecies, which you will understand better, when you have read in the history an account of their completion. In the mean time it will be sufficient to remark, that *the written prophecies* contain a great deal of *general instruction*. The *public crimes*, for which the Jews were threatened with *public calamities*, were, *forsaking and neglecting the worship of GOD*; and being *guilty of fraud, deceit, cruelty and oppression*. Every nation, therefore, in which such sins prevail, may justly fear GOD's judgments; for this reason every *individual* should take warning by the prophetic writings, to contribute his part towards a general reformation.

SECT.

S E C T. XX.

THE REIGN OF UZZIAH (CALLED ALSO * AZA-
RIAH) KING OF JUDAH.

THEN all the people of Judah took
Uzziah, who was sixteen years old,
and made him king in the room of his fa-
ther Amaziah.

In the twenty and seventh year of Jero-
boam king of Israel began Uzziah son of
Amaziah, king of Judah to reign.

Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he be-
gan to reign, and he reigned fifty and two
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also
was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

And he did that which was right in the
sight of the LORD, according to all that his
father Amaziah did.

And he fought GOD in the days of Zecha-
riah, who had understanding in the visions of
GOD: and as long as he fought the LORD,
GOD made him to prosper.

And he went forth and warred against the
Philistines, and GOD helped him against the
Philistines.

* 2 Kings xv. 1.

And

And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt: for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

Also he built towers in Jerusalem, and in the desert, and digged many wells, for he had much cattle, and vine-dressers; for he loved husbandry.

And he had an host of fighting men: the whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand and six hundred.

And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones.

And he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad: for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his GOD, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD that were valiant men:

And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.

Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand, to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests, in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

And

And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Ifaiah the prophet the son of Amoz write.

So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings: for they said, He is a leper. And Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The reign and character of Uzziah, bear so great a resemblance to those of former kings, that it is needless to enlarge much upon them: I therefore, my dear, shall only desire you to remark, that he does not appear to have been at any time given to *idolatrous practices*, but to have grown *careless* in the discharge of his religious duties, after the death of Zechariah. Who this good man was, to whom the king was so much indebted, we are not told; but some imagine he was the son of that Zechariah who was murdered by king Joash.

Uzziah was the means of raising the kingdom of Judah, through the blessing of GOD, to such a pitch
of

THE PROPHETS HOSEA AND ISAIAH. 137

of eminence as it had not known for a number of years; for you find he attended to every particular which constitutes the greatness of a nation. The only blemish in his character that we read of, was, the sin of invading the priest's office; this was a very presumptuous act, which we are told proceeded from pride; and you find he was humbled in a most exemplary manner: he could no longer contest with the priests, for they had an undoubted right to exclude all lepers from the congregation, and even from society.

In the reign of Uzziah, lived the prophets HOSEA and ISAIAH; the former predicted, "that * the tribes would, at a future time, appointed by the LORD, be carried into captivity; he also foretold, that the tribe of Judah should subsist after them, but at length be carried away captive beyond the river Euphrates; and, through the whole of his writings, laid open their sins, and declared God's judgments against a wicked and irreclaimable people." He entered on his prophetic office about the beginning of Uzziah's reign, at which time, you must remember, lived Jeroboam the second king of Israel: Isaiah did not begin prophesying till towards the latter end of Uzziah's reign. Hosea's predictions are too complicated for your comprehension at present; and those passages of Isaiah's, which I shall select for your perusal, will appear in other parts of the succeeding history. We understand, from some passages in scripture, that in the days of Uzziah there was a terrible earthquake (foretold by Amos two years before) a plague of locusts, and a great drought, mixed with dreadful flashes of fire.

* Stackhouse.

S E C T. XXI.

THE REIGN OF ZECHARIAH AND SHALLUM
KINGS OF ISRAEL.

IN the thirty and eighth year of Uzziah king of Judah, did Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

And the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

This was the word of the LORD, which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. And so it came to pass.

Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

For

For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabeſh in Samaria, and ſlew him, and reigned in his ſtead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It * is ſuppoſed by learned authors, and is noted in the margins of our Bibles, that there was an interregnum (or ſpace of time when the nation was in a ſtate of anarchy and confuſion, without any ſovereign) for eleven years (others ſay for twenty-two years): perhaps there were diſputes about the ſucceſſion, and conſpiracies formed by different factions, till at length Zechariah the ſon of Jeroboam was eſtabliſhed; by which the LORD's promiſe to Jehu, *that his ſons ſhould ſit on the throne to the fourth generation*, was fulfilled.

You find, however, that Zechariah was a very impious prince, and therefore his reign was ſhort; for God permitted him to be ſlain by one of his ſubjects, according to the prediction of the prophet Amos, which he ſpake many years before, as follows: “ *I will riſe againſt the houſe of Jeroboam with the ſword* †.”

Shallum was a wicked uſurper, as well as an idolater, and therefore God's judgment was in a very ſhort time ſent upon him; for he was ſuffered to fall by the hand of Menahem, Zechariah's general, who was then beſieging Tirzah; on hearing what Shallum had done, Manahem marched to Samaria, defeated and ſlew him, under pretence of avenging the death of his ſovereign; but as it proved, to gratify his own ambitious views.

* Biſhop Uſher. † Amos, vii. 9.

S E C T. XXII.

THE HISTORY OF THE PROPHET JONAH.

NOW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
 Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa: and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the LORD.

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them, but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

So the ship-master came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper?

arise,

arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not.

And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots; that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

Then they said unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us: what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew: and I fear the LORD the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD; because he had told them.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought and was tempestuous.

And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

Never-

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land ; but they could not : for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood : for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea : and the sea ceased from her raging.

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

Who

Who can tell if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

And GOD saw their works that they turned from their evil way : and GOD repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“ NINEVEH *, at the time Jonah was sent thither, was one of the largest and most ancient cities in the world ; supposed to have been built not long after the flood, and very soon after the tower of Babel, by Nimrod ; but being afterwards greatly enlarged by Ninus, from him it received its name. It was situated upon the banks of the Tigris, and (according to learned authors) was in length about twenty-one miles, nine broad, and fifty-four round ; it was surrounded with stately walls, and fortified with lofty towers, and is thought to have contained six hundred thousand persons.”

Jonah received a commission to visit this great city, and threaten it, in the name of the LORD, with speedy destruction ; instead of obeying the *divine command*, the prophet endeavoured to *fly* from the *presence of the LORD* : the excuse he made for doing so was, that he apprehended the SUPREME BEING, would, through his infinite mercy and goodness, change His purpose, and that then his predictions would be regarded as fictitious, and involve him in disgrace, if not in de-

* Stackhouse.

stru
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struction. It certainly was very sinful in Jonah to think so, as he might have been certain the LORD would do what was right, and that however He dealt with the Ninevites, would protect his prophet; it pleased the LORD, therefore, to inflict such a punishment as should convince Jonah of his error, strengthen his faith, and give him credit with the world, who would be ready to listen to one that had been so wonderfully preserved.

Whether the fish which swallowed up Jonah was a whale or not, is uncertain; many travellers describe some of this species, which they had seen, sufficiently large to swallow a man; and inform us of various sea-monsters beside, of most enormous sizes. Jonah's situation in the belly of the fish, must have been very dreadful. The relation of his being kept alive in such a place, would be perfectly incredible, if we endeavoured to account for it in a natural way; but if we impute it to the *miraculous power of God*, it is no longer so; for as *we* are able, with our limited capacities, to apply the creatures to our use in such a variety of ways, it cannot be unreasonable to suppose, that the GREAT CREATOR, can do with them *whatsoever seemeth good in his sight*. Those persons who disbelieve the scriptures, turn such relations as these into ridicule; but we shall do well in avoiding such persons: let *us* read these edifying histories with attention, and learn from them to reverence the Supreme Being.

The behaviour of the Ninevites was, on this occasion, exemplary in the highest degree; and you will find it mentioned by our Saviour himself in the New Testament, to the reproach of Israel. We may learn

146 THE HISTORY OF JONAH.

from the happy effects of it, that public fasting and humiliation for national sin, is well pleasing to the LORD: not that he delights in the affliction of his creatures, any farther than as it conduces to their reformation, and renders them objects of his mercy and loving-kindness.

Though the LORD was in a peculiar manner the God of *Israel*, he did not utterly forsake the rest of the world; the wonders which he wrought for his own people were done *openly*. In the wars with *Israel* the heathens frequently heard the prophets, and were eye-witnesses of many miracles; but they hardened their hearts against conviction: notwithstanding this (we have great reason to think) they were not brought to utter destruction without *particular* warnings, of which you will read many instances.

From *Jonah's* history we may learn to reflect on the omnipresence of God, and to say with the Royal Psalmist, “ *Whither shall we go from thy Spirit? or whither shall we flee from thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if we go down to the place of the dead, thou art there also. If we take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also, shall thy hand lead us, and thy right hand shall hold us!* ”

SECT.

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S E C T. XXIII.

THE REIGNS OF MENAHEM, PEKAHIAH, AND
PEKAH, WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN
OF HOSHEA, KINGS OF ISRAEL.

THEN Menahem smote Tipfah, and
all that were therein, and the coasts
thereof to Tirzah; because they opened not
unto him.

In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah
king of Judah, began Menahem the son of
Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten
years in Samaria.

And he did that which was evil in the
sight of the LORD: he departed not all his
days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of
Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

And Pul the king of Assyria came against
the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thou-
sand talents of silver, that his hand might be
with him, to confirm the kingdom in his
hand.

And Menahem exacted the money of Is-
rael, even of all the mighty men of wealth,
of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to
the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria

turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

And Menahem reigned ten years in Samaria, and he slept with his fathers: and Pekaiah his son reigned in his stead.

In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob, and Arieih, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room.

In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

And Hoshea the son of Elah, made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel, nine years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Menahem was a monster of barbarity; his ambition would endure no opposition, as his miserable subjects experienced to their sorrow!

“TIRZAH, * which is frequently mentioned in Scripture, was, for a long time the *regal* city of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam, who was the first king of Israel after the division of the tribes, (though he dwelt for some time at Shechem) resided there, in his latter days at least, as did all the other kings of Israel,

* Stackhouse in the Notes.

until Omri, having reigned six years in Tirzah, built Samaria, and removed the royal seat thither, where it continued till a final period was put to the kingdom. Tipfah, where Manahem exercised so much cruelty, is supposed to have been a town near to Tirzah.

There is no occasion, my dear, for me to comment on the reign of Pekahiah, for what has been remarked of former kings, whose characters and fate resembled his, may be applied to him.

Pekah's reign is rendered remarkable by the captivity of the tribe of Naphtali, and a considerable part of the kingdom of Israel.

As you will, in the ensuing history, read a good deal about the Assyrians, I will, my dear, before we proceed, give you a short account of the origin of the Assyrian monarchy. PUL*, the king mentioned in this section, appears (according to scripture) to have been the founder of it; and we have reason to conjecture, that he was raised up to great power in the same manner as Hazael, king of Syria had been, that he might be instrumental to the punishment of the Israelites, for their abominable idolatry and profaneness; for we do not read in sacred history, of any king of Assyria till this period; and it had been foretold by the prophet Amos, (in particular) above twenty years before, that GOD *would RAISE up a nation that should bumble the house of Israel*, at that time elated with their success against Damascus and Hamath; but what nation, he names not; from which we may imply, that it did not then subsist, because you will find, that succeeding prophets frequently mention the Assyrians:

* Universal History.

ASSYRIAN MONARCHY. 151

PUL is supposed to have reigned at Nineveh, and to have been either that king to whom Jonah preached, or, as is most likely, the son of him. What particular conquests he gained we are not told; but there is reason to think, that he either vanquished or received voluntary homage from Syria, and other nations, as well as from Israel; perhaps he was rendered eminent, and permitted to molest Israel as a reward for him and the Ninevites, for their repentance. The new monarchy of the Assyrians, you find, gained ground under the government of TIGLATH-PILESER, who is supposed to have been the son and successor of PUL.

HOSHEA did not begin his reign till several years after he had murdered Pekah.

S E C T. XXIV.

THE REIGN OF JOTHAM KING OF JUDAH.

IN the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

Howbeit, the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still on the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD.

Moreover, he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second and the third:

So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

(In

(In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.)

Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jotham being a pious good prince, was blessed with a prosperous and honourable reign; he gained some considerable advantages; repaired and beautified the Temple, and at length died in peace. Pekah, king of Israel, having entered into a league with Rezin, king of Syria, made an attempt against Judah, but was not suffered to prevail; for his adversary, Tiglath-pileser, diverted his attention to his own kingdom, by invading the land of Naphtali, as you have lately read.

S E C T. XXV.

THE REIGN OF AHAZ KING OF JUDAH.

IN the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the fuller's field:

And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of the smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah:

Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,

Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us,
and

and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal;

Thus saith the LORD GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damafus is Rezin: and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Then Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him.

But Ahaz did not that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.

For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

He sacrificed also and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

Wherefore the LORD his GOD delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria: and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD GOD of their fathers.

And Zichri a mighty man of Ephraim slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said

unto

unto them; Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage, that reacheth up unto heaven.

And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bond-women unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?

Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war,

And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

So the armed men left the captives and the spoil, before the princes and all the congregation.

And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho the city of palm-trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

For

For the LORD brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel : for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son : come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him : for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

And Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria : but he helped him not.

And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar

altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

And he burned his burnt-offering and his meat-offering, and poured his drink-offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace-offerings upon the altar.

And he brought also the brazen altar which was before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt-offering, and the evening meat-offering; and the king's burnt-sacrifice, and his meat-offering; with the burnt-offering of all the people of the land, and
their

their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD, for the king of Assyria.

And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels

vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is quite shocking to read of such a king as Ahaz, who was a disgrace to human nature; “no * man ever had greater opportunities of doing good than he had, for at the time of his accession to the throne, his kingdom was in a very flourishing state, and the true religion established; we have reason to think he had had a good education, as well as good example, from his father: besides these advantages, Ahaz was particularly encouraged to fear and serve the LORD, by a gracious message sent to him by the prophet Isaiah, at the beginning of his reign, when he had cause to dread the utter ruin of his kingdom, by the united forces of Israel and Syria.” After the prophet had assured Ahaz that these enemies should not prevail against him,

* Universal History.

“ in * order to convince him that the final end of the Jewish state was not so near as he apprehended, Isaiah bid him ask for a sign, though ever so difficult, and it should be granted ; but the king, whether out of respect or despondency and unbelief, refusing to ask for the sign, the prophet assured him from the LORD, that before that time came, IMMANUEL, or GOD *with us*, that is to say, the *promised SAVIOUR*, should be born into the world.”

The prophet also foretold the approaching destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Syria by the king of Assyria ; but we must defer a more particular account of these wonderful predictions, as well as of many others, to a future time, as they are, in many respects, too difficult for your apprehension, and require the assistance of *learned commentators*.

AHAZ was soon delivered, by *divine interposition*, from the impending danger he so greatly dreaded, but was at length given up to his enemies ; however, God's promises, which were made for the sake of the house of David, must have had a happy effect in comforting the faithful part of his descendants. Pekah, king of Israel, was very inveterate against Judah ; and there is no knowing to what extremities he would have proceeded, if he had not been restrained by a prophet.

Ahaz was at length oppressed by his enemies on all sides, but instead of seeking to the LORD for relief, he applied to the king of Assyria. I need not say, how impious and ungrateful this action was, but must in-

* Isaiah vii. 14. See also the note on this passage in the present Bishop of London's new translation of Isaiah.

form you, that it is supposed Tiglath-pileser, after he had received the presents from Ahaz, instead of assisting him against the confederate kings, turned his whole strength against Syria, and having killed Rezin, the king of that place, seized upon Damascus, the capital, and put an end to the kingdom of Syria.

I have no occasion to repeat the variety of impieties Ahaz committed, because you have already read an account of them.

SECT.

S E C T. XXVI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

HEZEKIAH began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

And said unto them, Hear me ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD GOD of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have

turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.

Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense, nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place, unto the GOD of Israel.

Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives are in captivity for this.

Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD GOD of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

Then the Levites arose, and gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves; and cleansed the house of the LORD.

Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt-offering,
with

with all the vessels thereof, and the shew-bread table, with all the vessels thereof.

Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

And they offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings for all Israel.

And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.

And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. So the service of the house was set in order.

And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The good HEZEKIAH had been an associate with his father in the last year of his reign, and without doubt, had beheld with great concern, the neglect of
 God's

GOD's worship, but could not begin the reformation of the kingdom, during the life of Ahaz; however, as soon as he came to full possession of the throne, he made it the first object of his care, and pursued it with unremitting diligence,

Hezekiah was very sensible that the miseries which had fallen on the land of Judah, were the just punishment for their wickedness, and the consequence of their breach of the COVENANT which the LORD had on his part so punctually performed; he was therefore very solicitous to renew the covenant, knowing that the LORD had promised he would turn to his people whenever they sought him with a perfect heart, and forsook the sins which had rendered them abominable in his sight. The speech which the good king made to the priests and Levites, needs no explanation, and it had the intended effect; for the house of the LORD was soon cleansed from every defilement, all things removed, that had been unlawfully introduced, and every thing restored, that had been impiously set aside by Ahaz. When the king knew that the Temple was ready for divine service, he joyfully assembled the people at an early hour, and all the congregation joined with him, in humble and devout adoration of the LORD JEHOVAH.

Hezekiah * next resolved to keep the passover, and willing to extend his benevolence to the whole race of Jacob, sent to all the tribes, to give them notice of his intention; and though the land of Israel was in general immersed in idolatry, there was still some who gladly obeyed the summons, and assisted at the solemnity.

* See 2 Chron. ch. xxx.

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REFORMATION OF JUDAH. 169

That the feast of unleavened bread might be enjoyed by the poor as well as the rich, Hezekiah himself made ample provision for it by his liberality, and every heart rejoiced in the hopes of God's returning favour; their repentance found a gracious reception at the throne of mercy, and *the BLESSING of the LORD was again restored to his people.*

These religious exercises had a proper effect on the minds of the Israelites, and they proceeded to destroy all the monuments of idolatry that remained. Hezekiah took care to renew the service of the Temple according to the original institution of it, and to provide for the maintenance of the priests and Levites. Judah was once more in an honourable and prosperous condition, and had every encouragement to be faithful to the LORD.

The people of Israel had even made the brazen serpent, which Moses erected in the wilderness, an object of adoration; Hezekiah therefore thought it necessary to destroy it.

S E C T. XXVII.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF HOSHEA
KING OF ISRAEL.

AND Hoshea reigned over Israel: against him came up Shalmanezar king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the

LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments, and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After the death of Tiglath-pilefar, Shalmanezar succeeded to the throne of Assyria, who obliged Hoshea

172 ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES.

to become tributary to him. “ So, * king of Egypt, was originally an Ethiopian, but had lately invaded Egypt, and having taken the king of that country prisoner, caused him to be burnt alive, and then seizing his kingdom, reigned there in his stead; he soon became powerful, and Hoshea, king of Israel, entered into a confederacy with him, hoping, by his assistance, to free himself from Assyrian bondage; and in consequence of this, he withdrew his subjection from Shalmanezar, and would pay him no more tribute;” and on this account it was, that the king of Assyria invaded Samaria: this invasion was fatal to the kingdom of Israel, for they repeatedly rebelled against the LORD, and were become so incorrigibly wicked, that he deserted them, and they were left a prey to their enemies, but not without being often warned of their danger by his prophets.

In order that you may yourself judge of God's just dealings with this stubborn and rebellious people, you shall read here some parts of the prophetic writings, which will convince you that the ALMIGHTY dealt with them like an affectionate parent, who, before he disinherits a disobedient son, uses every means to reform him.

PARTS OF THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH THE SON OF AMOZ.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

* Prideaux's Connection.

The

ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES. 173

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures: their land is also full of horses; neither is there any end of their chariots.

Their land also is full of idols: they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.

And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

Wo unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.

Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine enflame them.

And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.

Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;

To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless.

And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will you leave your glory?

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few.

For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings.

Is not Calno, as Charchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?

As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem, and of Samaria:

Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

Wherefore shall it come to pass, that when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

Shall

ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES. 175

Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith: or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against him that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.

Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness, and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day.

Wo to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me: and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

That walk to go down into Egypt, (and have not asked at my mouth) to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt.

Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:

Get you out out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

176 ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES.

Wherefore thus saith the holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:

Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters vessel that is broken in pieces, he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it, a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.

For thus saith the LORD GOD, the holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not.

But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you, be swift.

One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one: at the rebuke of five shall ye flee, till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our GOD, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

You

You see, my dear, from this small portion of the prophecies, that the Israelites were admonished both by promises and threatnings, expressed in the most pathetic and persuasive language to forsake their evil ways. The crimes which rendered them abominable in the sight of the LORD were enumerated; they were warned not to rely on Egypt for help, and were told that the Assyrians should prevail against them. Had the Israelites repented like the Ninevites, there is no doubt but that they also would have been saved from destruction. The LORD would have restrained the fierce wrath of the Assyrian king, who was, though he knew it not, the “rod † of divine anger;” but as neither kindness nor severity could reform this rebellious nation, they were justly exposed to the consequences of their disobedience, and the “Israelitish kingdom was brought to an end, after it had stood divided from that of Judah two hundred and fifty-four years. A great number of the Israelites escaped with their lives; some into Egypt, but more into the kingdom of Judah, where they weaned themselves by degrees from their idolatries, and became subjects to Hezekiah, and his successors.” It is needless to inform you of the various conjectures of different authors respecting the countries to which the captive Jews were transported, as it is a point of no importance to us, and impossible to be exactly ascertained.

* Isaiah x.

S E C T. XXVIII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND Hezekiah trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth, and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me, I will bear. And the king
of

of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold.

And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.

At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

After these things and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,

I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

And it came to pass afore Ifaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears : behold, I will heal thee : on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

And I will add unto thy days fifteen years : and I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria : and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And Hezekiah said unto Ifaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day ?

And Ifaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken : shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees ?

And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees : nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

And

And Ifaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

And Ifaiah said, Take a lump of figs; and they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.

And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem;

He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men, to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city. And they did help him.

So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?

Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the

the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,

Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him.

With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the LORD our GOD, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“ It appears, that whilst the king of Assyria was employed against Samaria, Hezekiah took the opportunity of recovering what had been lost from his kingdom in his father's reign; and had such success against the Philistines in particular, that he not only regained the cities of Judah, which they had seized during the time that Pekah king of Israel, and Rezin king of Syria, distressed the land, but even dispossessed them of almost all their own country, except Gaza and Gath:” these successes encouraged Hezekiah to refuse the tribute which Ahaz, his father, had agreed to pay to the king of Assyria; who, it is thought, was diverted from his purpose of invading him at this time, by a war which he was engaged in with the king of Tyre, and died before the conclusion of it: he was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, who renewed the

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION. 183

demand, and on Hezekiah's refusal, " came * against him with a very powerful army, and took from him a great number of fortified cities, in so short a time, as seemed to threaten the total ruin of the whole kingdom. Hezekiah, who saw his error too late, had no way to retrieve it but by a speedy submission; he therefore sent an embassy to Sennacherib, acknowledging his fault, and promising to submit to whatever terms he should impose upon him." Sennacherib was by this means induced to withdraw his army for the present, without inflicting any other penalty than the annual payment of three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold, amounting to three hundred and fifty-one thousand pounds of our money. But this respite, though so dearly bought, did not last long; for the treacherous Assyrian king, who was still at Lacish, soon after sent his army, under the command of Tartan, Rabfaris, and Rab-shakeh, directly against Jerusalem, so that Hezekiah saw himself in greater danger than ever, of losing his kingdom and liberty; if not his life.

About this time Hezekiah was afflicted with a painful disease, in its nature mortal, and above the power of human art to cure; the prophet Isaiah was sent to inform him of his danger; and you read, that the king was exceedingly affected with the awful summons; " for, * besides the love of life, so natural to all men, Hezekiah had many reasons to make him particularly desirous of it at this time, for he was in the very prime of his days; the Assyrian power he had cause to dread would overwhelm his kingdom, and he had, as yet, no son to succeed him; which was a circumstance

* Stackhouse.

184 HEZEKIAH'S HUMILITY.

of great affliction, as he was the last of the royal family of David. He saw ruin and desolation likely to fall on his country, and had reason to fear he was under the displeasure of God, as length of days was a part of the blessing which the LORD had promised to good kings; and therefore, having these prospects before his eyes, he might well melt into tears at the prospect of approaching death."

His humility and penitence were so exemplary, that the prophet was ordered to assure him, his life should be extended, and that he should be delivered from the Assyrians; and to strengthen his faith, a very extraordinary SIGN was given him. I need not, my dear, attempt a particular description of this miracle, because I am sure you are fully convinced, that however astonishing it might be, according to the usual course of things, it was not too difficult for the ALMIGHTY to effect.

"As * soon as Hezekiah recovered, he made all possible preparations for a brave defence of his kingdom, fortified his city, and laid in great store of arms and provisions for the siege, and cut off, as much as possible, all supply of water from the enemy; he then called his officers together, and exhorted them to rely wholly on God, and by no means to be discouraged by the number and strength of the faithless Assyrians."

* Universal History.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXIX.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabfaris, and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah, with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the high way of the fuller's field.

And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

Thou sayest (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

Now,

Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it? so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

But if ye say unto me, we trust in the LORD our GOD: is not that he whose high places, and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? the LORD said to me, Go up against his land, and destroy it.

Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it:

talk

and talk not with us in the Jews language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may be punished with you?

Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:

Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand.

Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Hearken not unto Hezekiah. For thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:

Until

Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vine-yards, a land of oil-olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he perswadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?

But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word. For the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.

And

And it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

And they said, Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy.

It may be the LORD thy GOD will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living GOD: and will reprove the words which the LORD thy GOD hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his

his own land: and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

So Rab-shakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,

Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?

Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Thelazar?

Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and
Hezekiah

Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD GOD of Israel which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living GOD.

Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore have they destroyed them.

Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD GOD, even thou only.

Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

This

This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the holy One of Israel.

By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.

Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they

they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor

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come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD :

For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And it came to pass that night that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharazer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Efarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The proud Assyrian king Shalmanesar, having subdued the kingdom of Israel, and "*other nations not a few,*" agreeably to the prophet's prediction, which

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you read in a former Section *, purposed to destroy the kingdom of Judah also; but Hezekiah was supported against him by the LORD, and therefore he was not able to prevail. Sennacherib, the successor of Shalmaneser, inheriting his father's ambition and impetuosity, pursued the same plan of conduct, and succeeded so far, as to take some of the fenced cities of Judah; but † *when the LORD had (for the present) performed his whole work upon mount SION, and on JERUSALEM, he cast down the heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.*

You cannot fail of perceiving, my dear, that the speech which Rab-shakeh made to Hezekiah's ministers, was an open insult of the DIVINE MAJESTY. Rab-shakeh was an eloquent man, and therefore Eliakim had great reason to dread the effect of his plausible arguments; especially, as the people of Judah, had on so many occasions, been easily persuaded to forsake the LORD, and join with idolaters; and therefore were in particular danger of being seduced, at a time, when such misfortunes threatened them, as they could not by human means avert: but the good example of their excellent sovereign, and a regular attendance on public worship, had produced such happy effects on their minds, that they readily obeyed the king's command, and listened to the vain boastings of Rab-shakeh, with silent indignation; whilst Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, shocked at his blasphemy, and grieved for the despised and afflicted condition of Jerusalem, *rent their clothes.* The behaviour of Hezekiah, when he received the in-

* Sect. xxvii.
tion afterwards.

† Ibid. This prophecy had a farther comple-

sulting message, was perfectly suited to the occasion, and expressive of the sorrow he felt at the indignity offered to the *holy name* of God.

The Assyrian monarch alarmed, as the prophet had foretold he would be, “*with a RUMOUR*,” went to defend his own territories from the invasion of the king of Ethiopia; and his generals retired from Jerusalem, without waiting for Hezekiah’s answer; but you find, that Sennacherib not receiving the submission he required, repeated his insults in a haughty letter, wherein he boasted of having subdued the gods of other nations, and expressed the highest degree of confidence, that he was also able to resist and defeat the LORD JEHOVAH. The divine promises made by the mouth of Isaiah, were soon fulfilled, the enemy returned, and were preparing to attack Jerusalem; but before they could have time to commit any hostilities, the greatest part of their army was miraculously smitten, so that when they *should have arisen* in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses! Sennacherib, terrified with this sudden overthrow, fled back to Nineveh, with the utmost precipitation, where he was soon after assassinated by two of his own sons.

From this wonderful defeat of the mighty Assyrian army, we may learn, my dear, “that as the LORD *still*, at his pleasure, *the raging of the sea, and the noise of the waves*; in like manner *he stills the raging of the people*. When the passions of men are most inflamed, and their designs just ripe for bursting into execution, often by some unexpected interposition, he calls upon the world to observe, that there is one higher than the highest upon earth, who can frustrate their devices in a

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moment, and command *the earth to be still before him*. Proud fleets, destined to carry destruction to neighbouring kingdoms, may cover the ocean; He blows with his wind, and they are scattered. Mighty armies may go forth to the field in all the glory of human strength, but the issues of battle are with him. He gives to some slight event the power of deciding the fate of nations. A thousand unseen ministers stand ready to be the instruments of his power, in humbling the pride, and checking the efforts of the wrath of man; as in the instance of haughty Sennacherib, and that boasted tempest of his wrath, which he threatened to pour on all the Jewish nation. It was allowed to prevail against the Israelites, as a punishment for their incorrigible wickedness, and was employed as an instrument of discipline and correction to the king and people of Judah, in order to produce in them proper reflections upon their duty, and their past errors; as they wisely considered it in this light, and humbled themselves before the LORD, he graciously * *restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's wrath*; and made it the means of advancing the temporal prosperity of his faithful people, and of confirming the truth of his holy religion and his Almighty power."

"Let this history, therefore, my dear, lead us to a religious contemplation of the hand of God, in all the transactions of the world. Let us not censure Providence, on account of any seeming disorders and evils which at present take place: the plans of divine wisdom, are too large and comprehensive to be discerned by us in all their extent; and where we see

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

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only by parts, we must frequently be at a loss in judging of the whole. *The way of God is in the sea, and his path in the great waters; his footsteps are not known*. But although thou sayest thou canst not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him†. Whatever distresses we suffer from the wrath of man, we have ground to believe that they befall us not in vain. Let us then study to gain the protection and favour of the ALMIGHTY. If he be for us, who or what can be against us? Let us pursue the measures which he has appointed for obtaining his grace, by faith, repentance, and a holy life, and we shall have no reason to be afraid of any evil tidings; our hearts will be fixed, trusting in the LORD; and we need not fear what man can do unto us||."*

* Psalm lxxvii. 19. † Job xxxv. 14. || The above reflections, with which I have adorned my page, are collected from Dr. Blair's most excellent sermon on the *Divine Government of the passions of men*.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXX.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

AND Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;

Store-houses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.

Moreover, he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.

This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon: and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

For at that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are
come

come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.

Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts.

Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt have, shall they take away; and they shall be slaves in the palace of the King of Babylon.

Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Hezekiah, though in his general character a very good man, was not proof against such a tide of prosperity as now flowed in upon him; he gloried in his wealth and greatness, as if they had been acquired by his own abilities, forgetful of the hand of the LORD, which had wrought so wonderful a deliverance for him and his people; and therefore made an ostentatious display of the riches and strength of his kingdom, to the Babylonian ambassadors.

BABYLON is supposed to have been originally founded by Nimrod, and to have been the first kingdom in the world; but there is little said about it in scripture till the time of Hezekiah, from which some learned authors suppose, “that * if this kingdom rose to any great height after it was first founded, it had sunk again as others had done, and therefore was inconsiderable at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel. It appears very probable, that the Assyrian and Babylonian kings were two branches of the same family, and that PUL, the first Assyrian conqueror, left two sons, Tiglath-pilesar, and Nabonassar; to the former of whom he bequeathed the kingdom of Assyria, and the Babylonian to the latter. Tiglath-pilesar the elder, resided at Nineveh, the original seat of the empire; while Nabonassar, who was the younger brother, held his residence at Babylon. As the two kingdoms were governed by princes of the same family, it is likely that there was great harmony between them,

* Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology—Universal History.

and that the younger branch at Babylon, acknowledged a kind of superiority in, and subjection to the elder in Nineveh; and this affinity accounts for the Assyrian king's forbearing to molest Babylon, whose situation would otherwise have attracted his first attention, when he had formed a design of extending his dominions."

Of the kings that succeeded Nabonassar in Babylon, nothing is recorded in scripture till the reign of Bero-dach, or Merodach-baladan, who sent the embassy to Hezekiah: he is supposed to have had a double motive for sending; first to inform himself concerning the prodigy of the sun's retrogression, and also to express his friendly disposition towards a king, who seemed to be favoured by the idol, to whom the Babylonians paid adoration; for they worshipped the sun, and were very skilful in the science of astronomy.

The conduct of Hezekiah was highly blameable, but the dreadful message he received by the prophet, brought him to a sense of his error; and therefore, no farther punishment was inflicted, than informing him, that the Babylonians would, in a short time, not only strip his kingdom of all that was most valuable in it, but would even reduce some of his family to a state of slavery: this must doubtless have been a great mortification to Hezekiah, but it was his duty to acquiesce in the dispensations of infinite wisdom and goodness; and he comforted himself with the thoughts, *that peace and truth would remain in his days*; and doubtless depended on the promises of God repeatedly made by the prophets, that He would protect and sustain all those who served him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, even if they were reduced to a state of captivity; and

204 ISAAIAH'S PREDICTION.

you will find, in the sequel, that his hopes were well-grounded.

In the days of Hezekiah lived the prophets MICAH and NAHUM. The former foretold the judgments which God would bring both on Israel and Judah for their sins: the latter described the dreadful destruction of NINEVEH, of which you will read an account in the following history.

ISAAIAH not only warned the *sinful* Israelites in general, of the danger they incurred by offending God, but delivered many predictions for the *comfort* of the *faithful*, concerning *their return from captivity*, and the *kingdom of MESSIAH*. He also foretold the judgments that would fall upon the Assyrians, Babylonians, Moabites, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Tyrians, and other heathen nations with whom the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were concerned, which were literally fulfilled, as we shall occasionally remark.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXXI.

THE REIGN OF MANASSEH KING OF JUDAH.

MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzi-bah.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed: and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, in Jerusalem will I put my name.

And he built altars for all the host of heaven, in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits, and wizards:

wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever.

Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers: only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,

Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols:

Therefore

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies;

Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin, wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

And

And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

And prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

And he took away the strange gods, and the idols out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings, and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

Nevertheless, the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.

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And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza, and Ammon his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Manasseh was only twelve years old when his father Hezekiah died; he seems to have been naturally of a vicious disposition, and most likely despised the admonitions of those to whom his father had committed the care of his education; and thought that because he was heir to the throne, he stood in no need of instruction: there were, without doubt, persons in the court ready to flatter his vices and follies, with a view to their own advancement, and the restoration of those idolatries from which Hezekiah had reformed the nation: however it was, Manasseh surpassed in wickedness all the kings of Judah who had been before him, particularly by the impious act of placing an idol in the house of the LORD; and his great cruelty to his subjects in general, and the prophets in particular; amongst the rest, to Isaiah, whom he is supposed to have condemned to be sawn asunder.

The people were too ready to follow the bad example of their sovereign, and conspired with him to banish, if possible, their GOD out of the land. Those who continued faithful, could no longer attend divine worship in the Temple, as it was now dedicated to idols. If you consider, my dear, the conditions of the *covenant* which God had repeatedly made with his people, you must perceive the enormity of their offence: they

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they would not have been punished beyond their deserts, if they had been taken from the world by a sudden judgment from heaven; but the *Almighty*, in remembrance of his promises to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and his faithful servant *David*, sent prophets repeatedly to teach them their duty, to reprove and to convert them; but they hardened their hearts, and despised his mercy, till at last he permitted the *Assyrians* to prevail against them. How long *Manasseh* continued in prison, and by what means he regained his liberty we are not told; but may judge of the miseries he endured from the following prayer, which is said to have been composed by him at that time.

THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH KING OF JUDAH,
WHEN HE WAS CAPTIVE IN BABYLON.

O * LORD, ALMIGHTY GOD of our fathers, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and of their righteous seed: who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof: who hast bound the sea by the word of thy commandment: who hast shut up the deep, and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious name: whom all men fear, and tremble before thy power: for the Majesty of thy glory cannot be borne, and thine angry threatening towards sinners, is insupportable: but thy merciful promise is unmeasurable, and unsearchable: for thou art the most high LORD, of great compassion, long-suffering, very merciful, and repentest of the evils of men. Thou, O LORD, according to thy great goodness, hast promised repentance, and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee: and of thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may

* Apocrypha.

MANASSEH'S PENITENCE. 211

be saved. Thou therefore, O LORD, that art the GOD of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee, but thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O LORD, are multiplied, my transgressions are multiplied: and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven, for the multitude of mine iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head, neither have any release: for I have provoked thy wrath, and done evil before thee: I did not thy will, neither kept I thy commandments: I have set up abominations, and have multiplied offences. Now therefore, I bow the knee of my heart, beseeching thee of grace: I have sinned, O LORD, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, O LORD, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me for ever, by reserving evil for me, neither condemn me into the lower parts of the earth. For thou art the GOD, even the GOD of them that repent: and in me thou wilt shew all thy goodness: for thou wilt save me that am unworthy, according to thy great mercy. Therefore I will praise thee for ever all the days of my life: for all the powers of the heavens do praise thee, and thine is glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Manasseh's penitence seems to have been very sincere, and the LORD accepted it according to the promise made in his holy name by Moses, that “ *if * his people would return unto the LORD their GOD, with all*

* Deuteronomy, ch. xxx. ver. 2, &c. sequel.

their

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their hearts and with all their souls; that then he would turn their captivity, and have compassion upon them, and would bring them into the land which their fathers possessed."

Manasseh did all in his power to repair the mischief he had done to his kingdom by his impiety, and seems to have been pardoned for his offence, and to have been blessed with prosperity in the latter part of his reign. We have reason to suppose, that the people of Judah did not heartily concur in his endeavours for their reformation; and retained an inclination to idolatrous practices, one of which they obstinately adhered to, namely, sacrificing on high places, notwithstanding the king's example and command to the contrary.

The prediction of Isaiah to Hezekiah, was soon, you find, fulfilled. It is said, that Manasseh was carried into BABYLON by the *Assyrians**: in order to account for this, we must have recourse to the history of the Assyrian empire.

"ESSAR-HADDON †, the son of Sennacherib, reigned over that monarchy, which was falling into decay at his father's death, in consequence of his defeat at Jerusalem, and the revolt of the Medes: but it is supposed, that the kindred race of the Babylonish kings becoming extinct, or some other cause, producing an inter-reign in that kingdom; Esar-haddon

* See 2 Kings xvii. 24, &c. † This king is called, in different parts of Scripture, *Assar-haddon*, *Sarchedon*, *Sargon*, and *Asnapper*. The famous exploit of *Judith*, in killing *Holfernes*, is placed in the days of *Manasseh*; but as it has no connection with the history of the kings of Judah, and is difficult to explain, it is omitted here: and the history of *Tobit* is passed over for the same reasons.

laid hold of the opportunity, and united it to the crown of Assyria. Grown potent by this union, he proceeded to establish his power over the more distant parts of his empire, and marched into Syria, and against the remnant of Israel and the kingdom of Judah; the two former he removed to distant lands, so that they now ceased to be nations, and in their stead introduced a supply of foreigners. He attempted to reduce Judah to the state of dependence it was in during the reign of king Ahaz, and so far succeeded as to take Manasseh, as you have read."

"Esar-haddon next resolved to invade Egypt and Ethiopia, which he did accordingly, and carried with him into captivity great numbers of the inhabitants; he held these kingdoms in subjection to him three years: this * reduction was foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

Thus did Esar-haddon extend his dominions, and spread, once more, the terror of the Assyrian name far and near. After a glorious reign of many years, he died † in the thirty-first year of Manasseh, and was succeeded by Saosduchius, called in scripture Nebuchadonofar. Esar-haddon is supposed to have been a mild and gracious prince, and particularly kind to the captive Jews, whom his father Sennacherib had treated with great cruelty, after his hasty return to Nineveh from the siege of Jerusalem."

* Isaiah xix. 23. † Prideaux's Connections.

S E C T. XXXII.

THE REIGN OF AMON KING OF JUDAH.

AMON was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.

But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;

And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When Manasseh was dead, and the people were no longer restrained by his authority from the worship of idols, they had recourse to their former abominations: and Amon, their young king, deluded as we may sup-

pose, by some persons whose opinion he valued, encouraged their impiety, and strove to justify it by his own example. No excuse can be made for him, as we may conclude that Manasseh had instructed him in his duty, and informed him of the sad effects of his own bad conduct; therefore, he should have rejected the evil counsel of those who endeavoured to draw him aside from the true God: but youth are too apt to lend a willing ear to such as flatter them, and encourage their vices and follies. How much happier are those, who contract early habits of piety and virtue, and steadfastly resolve to serve their God, and promote the felicity of their fellow-creatures. Had Amon done so, he would have enjoyed a prosperous and honourable reign in consequence of God's covenant with the House of David.

S E C T. XXXIII.

THE REIGN OF JOSIAH KING OF JUDAH.

JOSIAH was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father: and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.

For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the

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LORD, Hilkiash the priest found the book of the law of the LORD, given by Moses.

And Hilkiash answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiash delivered the book to Shaphan.

And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiash the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

And it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

And the king commanded Hilkiash, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is

found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

And Hilki'ah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Hasrath, keeper of the wardrobe. Now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college. And they spake to her to that effect.

And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.

Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands: therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.

And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel

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HULDAH'S PROPHECY. 219

Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard :

Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me : I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD.

Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people great and small : and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments,

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and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and with all his soul to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

Moreover, the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and

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and polluted it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed*.

Then he said, What title is that that I see? and the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el.

And he said, Let him alone, let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el.

And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

* 2 Kings xiii. 2.

But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.

Nevertheless, Jofiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

And the archers shot at king Jofiah: and the king faid to his servants, Have me away; for I am fore wounded.

His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the fecond chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerufalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the fepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerufalem mourned for Jofiah.

And Jeremiah lamented for Jofiah: and all the finging men and the finging women fpake of Jofiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Ifrael; and behold they are written in the lamentations.

A N N O-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Josiah was very young when he came to the throne, but had an excellent disposition, and in all probability good guardians. You find his *wisdom* and *piety* displayed themselves at an early age, for he was no more than sixteen years old when he assumed the government, and began the reformation of the kingdom; and only twenty when he made a progress through the whole land of Judah, in order to see *himself* that the altars, high-places, groves, and idols were effectually destroyed.

A few years afterwards he resolved to restore the Temple service, according to its original institution: in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, Jeremiah began to prophesy, and there is great reason to suppose, he encouraged the king in this good work. "The * copy of the law found by Hilkiah, is thought to have been that written by Moses, and by him commanded to be deposited with the Ark, in the MOST HOLY PLACE; but which some pious priest, had thus caused to be hid in the reign of Ahaz or Manasseh, to prevent its being destroyed." We can hardly suppose that all the copies of the law, which were very numerous in the days of Hezekiah were destroyed; but Josiah certainly had never, as the LORD † required, transcribed it with his own hand; because the only authentic copy was not to be found. The high priest, therefore, had great reason to rejoice when the original came to light, and

* Universal History.

† Deut.

Josiah's attention was particularly awakened to a more serious consideration of the undoubted original book of Moses, so as to observe passages which might before have escaped his observation. It seems to have been by the direction of *Divine Providence*, that Shaphan opened the book at that part of it which contained the curses denounced against the people of Israel, and the king in particular, for a neglect of the Law: Josiah resolved to leave nothing undone, that was in his power, to compleat the reformation of his kingdom; and therefore determined to assemble the people, in order to inform them that he had found the LAW OF MOSES, and to let them hear the *Words* of the COVENANT, which he read to them, as the LORD required; and then solemnly declared his resolution to observe the conditions of it in the strictest manner, and required his subjects to do the same. He next proposed to restore the observance of the three great festivals; and directed preparations to be made for a passover, which is said to have been "*such a one as had not been helden in Israel since the days of the judges, &c.*" from which we may understand, that it was celebrated with the most punctual observance of every direction given by Moses, which perhaps might not have been attended to in former ones. "After this the king took a second journey through his kingdom, in order that no abominations might remain, and settled courts of judicature every where; giving a strict charge to the magistrates, and also to the priests and Levites, to see that the people were instructed in the *law of Moses*, and kept obedient to it."

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“Josiah* had an undoubted right to destroy the monuments of idolatry in the land of Israel, as well as Judah; for after the captivity of the ten tribes, all who escaped put themselves under the protection, and were united with the subjects of the king of Judah; who, as the descendant of David, was their lawful sovereign. Besides, it is imagined that the kings of Assyria who conquered the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, did, at the time of Manasseh’s restoration, confer upon the kings of Judah, who perhaps paid them homage on this account, a sovereignty over all the land of Canaan.”

Josiah, by destroying the altar and high-place which Jeroboam had built at Bethel, fulfilled the following prophecy which was spoken by the man of God at the time when Jeroboam first burnt incense on it. “O† altar, altar, thus saith the LORD: Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, JOSIAH by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burn upon thee.”

Notwithstanding the reformation which appeared in the kingdom, “the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath—because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.” We must not suppose that the people were destined to destruction for the sins which Manasseh himself committed (for he by repentance and humility obtained the pardon of God) but for *their own concurrence* in them, and inclination to repeat them. The land was defiled by the innocent blood that was spilt in the days of Manasseh, and by the introduction of an idol into the SANCTUARY;

* Stackhouse.

† 2 Kings xiii. 2.

yet the people continued indifferent to *the honour of the LORD*; and were not solicitous to regain his favour: they observed, indeed, the *ceremonials of religion*, from a fear of the king's authority, but neglected to *reform their morals*, notwithstanding the continual admonitions of the prophets; of the nature of which you will be able to judge, by the following extract from the prophecy of Isaiah, in which he compares them, in his days, to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; and we have reason to believe, as his words were applicable to those who come after him, that they were spoken for them also.

Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our GOD, ye people of Gomorrah.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Your new-moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear you: your hands are full of blood.

Wash ye, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

ISAIAH'S ADMONITIONS. 227

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

You find by this, my dear, that the only way to reconcile themselves to their offended God, was, by a thorough reformation of mind and manners ; without this, their very sacrifices, though ordained by the LORD, became abominations ; because they were no longer proofs of sorrow for sin, and a desire of acceptance : it was not, therefore, the amendment of Manasseh, nor the fidelity of Josiah and a part of his subjects, that could avert the judgments of God ; because the sins which provoked them, still prevailed in the land ; you will find, however, when you read the prophetic writings, that great mercies were repeatedly promised to the faithful.

Josiah had reigned thirty-one years in profound peace, when he resolved to oppose Pharaoh-Necho in his expedition against Assyria. From this circumstance we may judge, that an alliance subsisted between the king of Judah and the Assyrian monarch. We are told, that “ *Josiah hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God.*” It cannot be thought that this idolatrous prince had received an express revelation from the LORD JEHOVAH, and therefore we may conclude, that by God he meant the idol to which the Egyptians paid adoration, and pretended to a divine commission, in order to deter Josiah from obstructing his progress.

It might be said, that “*Josiah went down to his grave in peace,*” as the Lord had promised by Huldah the prophetess, because he was taken away whilst his kingdom was in a prosperous state, before the calamities with which it was threatened came upon it, and whilst he was in peace and reconciliation with God; his death therefore may be considered as a *blessing* rather than a *judgment*, since there is reason to believe that his spirit was received amongst the righteous in heaven.

The death of this excellent prince was deservedly lamented by all his people; and Jeremiah the prophet, having a great esteem for him, and foreseeing the calamities which were coming upon the Jews, wrote a poem, which is in the Bible, entitled the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*.

In order that you may the better understand the ensuing part of this history, I shall now, my dear, give you a little information concerning other nations.

PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS WHICH ARE MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

I told you before, that after the death of Esar-haddon, Saosduchinus (called in scripture Nebuchadonofar) succeeded to the crown of Assyria: he was a warlike prince, remarkable for the great advantages he gained over the Medes, who, under the conduct of their king, invaded Assyria; Nebuchadonofar raised a powerful army and defeated them, and killed their king: after this victory he entered Media, and extending his conquests to the famous city of Ecbatana, the capital of that kingdom, levelled it with the ground. He then returned to Nineveh, and celebrated his victory by re-

velling

velling and feasting for one hundred and fifty days; then resuming his martial spirit, he resolved to subdue the whole earth*, but died in the midst of his career.

Nebuchadonofar was succeeded by Chynaladan; in his reign, the Medes, having Cyaxaris, a young and warlike prince at their head, not only recovered what the Assyrians formerly took from them, but defeated them in a pitched battle, and obliged them to take shelter in Nineveh their capital city, which they closely besieged; but were obliged to abandon their enterprize, and employ their arms in the defence of their own country against the Scythians, who had invaded it.

In the mean time Nabossolassar, a Babylonian general, whom Chynaladan had intrusted with the command of his troops in Chaldea, taking advantage of the low ebb to which the Assyrian power was reduced, revolted from him, and seized on the kingdom of Babylon for himself: Chynaladan, on hearing this, set fire to his palace, and was consumed with his wealth in the flames of it. Who were his successors history does not inform us."

In † the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Josiah, which was the twenty-third of Cyaxaris king of Media, Nabossolassar king of Babylon, having married his son Nebuchadnezzar to the daughter of Astyages, Cyaxaris's eldest son, entered into a confederacy with him against the Assyrians; and joining their forces together, they besieged Nineveh, slew the king, and destroyed that ancient and noble city; from which time, Babylon became the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy.

* Universal History.

† Prideaux's Connection.

230 HEATHEN NATIONS.

In the destruction of Nineveh was fulfilled the prophecies of Jonah, Nahum, and Zephaniah, written many years before concerning it. The Babylonians and Medes having thus destroyed Nineveh, the surrounding nations were alarmed at their growing power and greatness; particularly Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, who marched, as you have lately read, to make war upon them with a great army.

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S E C T. XXXIV.

THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ, (CALLED ALSO SHALLUM, KING OF JUDAH(; AND THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM.

THEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem.

Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.

And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

And the king of Egypt made Eliakam his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him to Egypt.

Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

And Jeremiah went down to the house of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and spake there the word.

Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates :

Thus saith the LORD, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor : and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place :

For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah, Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon : yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

And

And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man unto his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

For thus saith the LORD touching Shalum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more:

But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more:

Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that

that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermillion!

Shalt thou reign because thou clovest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?

He judged the cause of the poor and the needy, then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness; and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother! or, Ah, my sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, lord! or, Ah, his glory!

He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoahaz was not the rightful heir to the crown, being a younger son; neither was he chosen by the LORD, but was raised to the throne by a faction. He soon discovered his wicked inclinations; but before he had an opportunity of committing many impious acts, Pharaoh-Necho having taken Carchemish, a great city belonging to the Babylonians, was returning towards Egypt, when hearing that Jehoahaz was made king of Judah without his concurrence, and probably that he was in arms against him, made him captive, as you have read, and placed his brother Jehoiakim on the throne; and after imposing on the inhabitants an annual tribute, returned in great triumph to his own country.

Jehoiakim proved as wickedly inclined as his brother, and the people, who (as I observed in the preceding section, never entered heartily into Josiah's plans of reformation) began to follow their own inclinations, and to run into all kinds of impiety and immorality, upon which the prophet Jeremiah was sent to warn the king, as you have read.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXXV.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH.

IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying,

Thus saith the LORD, Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil which I propose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, If ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law which I have set before you,

To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

Then

Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

So the priests and the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

Now it came to pass when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests, and the prophets, and all the people took him saying, Thou shalt surely die.

Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? and all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house.

Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die: for he hath prophesied

prophefied againſt this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

Then ſpake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, ſaying, The LORD ſent me to propheſy againſt this houſe and againſt this city all the words that ye have heard.

Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced againſt you.

As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as ſeemeth good and meet unto you:

But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye ſhall ſurely bring innocent blood upon yourſelves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath ſent me unto you to ſpeak all theſe words in your ears.

Then ſaid the princes and all the people unto the prieſts and to the prophets, This man is not worthy to die: for he hath ſpoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

Then roſe up certain of the elders of the land, and ſpake to all the aſſembly of the people, ſaying,

Micah

Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them; thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemeiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah.

And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt.

And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt.

And

And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king: who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After Jeremiah had been at the king's house, he went to the Temple, and there spake to all the people that came thither to worship; declaring that if they would repent and amend, God would yet turn from his wrath. You have already read in what pathetic terms he addressed them; from which you will be able to make your own reflections on their obduracy, and the goodness of the LORD.

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S E C T. XXXVI.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH.

AND Jehoiakim paid a tribute of an hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold to Pharaoh-Necho; but he taxed the land to give the money.

Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Then Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day: that is the three and twentieth year; the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever :

And go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt.

Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Because ye have not heard my words,

Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment,

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Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment: and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

And it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and will make it perpetual desolations.

And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah, from the LORD, saying,

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

You read in a former section, that Pharaoh-Necho carried Jehoahaz captive into Egypt, and made Jehoiakim, his brother, king of Judah, on condition of his becoming tributary to him; and you find Jehoiakim was obliged to lay very heavy taxes on his subjects to keep his engagements. Jehoiakim did not take warning from the misfortunes of his father, but continued to provoke God by his wickedness, and his people committed all kinds of abominations; yet the Lord would not destroy them, without using every means to bring them to repentance. And not only commanded Jeremiah to inform them of the judgments he should inflict, but even after they had shut the good prophet up in prison, commanded him to cause Baruch, a disciple of his, to write the words which he should have spoken, had he been at liberty, and read them in the House of the Lord, on the great day of expiation; which still continued to be observed annually according to the law of Moses, that they might be induced, when assembled on so solemn an occasion, “*to present their supplications to the Lord, and to return every one from his evil way.*” Baruch executed his commission, but failed of success, for both king and people con-

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BARUCH'S AFFLICTION. 245

tinued inexorable; though Baruch himself was so exceedingly afflicted with the thoughts of the evil that was coming upon the land, that he would have fallen into despondency, but that the LORD vouchsafed to assure him, by the mouth of Jeremiah, that “ *he should be preserved, and his life given him as a prey or reward for his fidelity, in all places whithersoever he went.*”

In the third year of Jehoiakim, Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, finding that on Pharoah-Necho's taking Carchemish, all Syria and Palestine had revolted to him, and being, on account of his age and infirmities, unable to march thither to reduce them, he made Nebuchadnezzar his son his associate in the empire, and sent him with an army into those parts.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar having defeated the army of the Egyptian king, marched towards Syria and Palestine. It is likely that Jehoiakim and the princes were absent from Jerusalem, making preparations to resist the power of Nebuchadnezzar, or else in such great consternation, that they did not express any resentment against Jeremiah and Baruch, on account of the roll which they had published to the people.

When the day of expiation returned again the next year, Jeremiah sent Baruch to read the roll a second time in the chamber of Gemariah: for the king and people, so far from being reformed by the late calamities, grew more and more wicked.

The chamber of Gemariah the scribe, was the room where the king's council used to sit. The lords of the council were greatly terrified, and were solicitous

246 JEHOIAKIM'S PRESUMPTION.

to preserve the prophet and his disciple from the effects of the king's indignation, which they imagined would be excited by this action. It proved as they expected; for the impious Jehoiakim, disregarding the word of the LORD, burnt the leaves as they were read, till the roll was entirely consumed; and would have destroyed the prophet, but that divine providence interposed for his preservation.

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S E C T. XXXVII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH.

IN the days of Pharaoh-Necho, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.

And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did;

And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.

So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoiakim, after having served the king of Babylon three years, refused to pay him tribute, and renewed his confederacy with Pharaoh-Necho; upon which Nebuchadnezzar sent orders to all his lieutenants and governors of provinces to attack him, as you have read.

The LORD permitted him to be molested with such various enemies, on account of his disobedience to the divine will. In what manner he died we are not informed, but there is no doubt his death was ignominious, and as the prophet had foretold, and * his memory hateful. The Jews, to this day, observe a fast in commemoration of Jehoiakim's burning the roll which Baruch read.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS.

Nebuchadnezzar, after his departure from Jerusalem, employed all the rest of the year in carrying on his war with the Egyptians; in which he was so successful, that before the ensuing winter, he had driven them out of Syria and Palestine. Shortly after, died Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, having reigned twenty-one years; on hearing which, Nebuchadnezzar hastened home, and was made king in his stead. His empire contained Chaldea, Assyria, Arabia, Syria, and Palestine (the latter included the whole land of Israel) Zedekiah, though called king of Judah, reigned there only as Nebuchadnezzar's deputy.

Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, died one year before Jehoiakim, having reigned sixteen years, and was succeeded by Psammis his son.

* Jer. xxii.

S E C T. XXXVIII.

THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN (CALLED ALSO JE-
CONIAH AND CONIAH) KING OF JUDAH.

JEHOIACHIN was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

Then spake Jeremiah the prophet, saying, As I live saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence :

And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born ; and there shall ye die.

But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD:

Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king
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And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen, and smiths: none remained, save the poorer sort of the people of the land.

And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoiakim was not restrained from his wickedness by the prophet's denunciations, neither would he humble himself before the LORD, and therefore he was left to suffer the consequences of his folly and obduracy.

Nebuchadnezzar's lieutenants and governors of the provinces, continued to besiege Jerusalem after the death of Jehoiachin: at the end of three months the king of Babylon came against it in person, with his

252 JEHOIACHIN'S CAPTIVITY.

royal army. Jehoiachin, unable to defend the city, submitted as you read; but Nebuchadnezzar put him in chains, and sent him to Babylon, where he continued a miserable captive till the death of that monarch, which was thirty-six years. "Had * he taken the method which Hezekiah did, and made his peace with God, he would have had no cause to fear the king of Babylon, but might have held out with courage, honour, and success; but wanting the faith and piety of an Israelite, he had not the resolution of a man, a soldier, and a prince." Now was fulfilled the word of God, spoken by † Moses. "*The Lord shall bring against thee a nation from afar, of fierce countenance, that shall eat the fruit of thy land, and besiege thee in all thy gates.*"

You find that Nebuchadnezzar carried with him vast quantities of spoil, and a great many captives he had taken some away eight years before this, among whom were Daniel and his friends; these had behaved so well, that the king was desirous to have more such. He also took all the great men and principal officers, lest they should raise conspiracies against him. And carried the smiths away, in order that the inhabitants of Jerusalem might not be able to procure arms.

* Henry's Annotations.

† Deut. xxviii. 48.

S E C T. XXXIX.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

AND the king of Babylon made Mat-
taniah Jehoiachin's father's brother
king instead of Jehoiachin, and changed his
name to Zedekiah.

And he did that which was evil in the
sight of the LORD.

And the word of the LORD came unto Je-
remiah, saying, Make thee bonds and yokes,
and put them upon thy neck.

And send them to the king of Edom, and
to the king of Moab, and to the king of the
Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and
to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the
messengers which come to Jerusalem unto
Zedekiah king of Judah :

And command them to say unto their
masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts the
God of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your
masters,

I have

I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your forcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon.

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For they prophesy a lye unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD, and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The king of Babylon, made MATTANIAH, king of Judah, in the room of Jehoiachin; and to let all the world know that he was entirely dependent on him, he changed his name. ZEDEKIAH signifies *the justice of the LORD*; by which Nebuchadnezzar meant to put him continually in mind of the vengeance which he was to expect from the LORD *his* God, if he violated the oath of fidelity, which he had in his name sworn to the king of Babylon.

You find that Zedekiah followed the bad example of his predecessors, yet the prophet was sent to admonish him and his subjects; for though the LORD had determined the destruction of the city in case the people did not repent, which he knew they would not do, he promised to have compassion on *every individual* who acknowledged his transgressions, and submitted to his ALMIGHTY POWER.

After

After the departure of Nebuchadnezzar out of Judea and Syria, Zedekiah having settled himself upon the throne, the kings of the Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, Tyrians, and other nations, sent their ambassadors to congratulate him on his accession to the throne, and proposed a league with him against the king of Babylon; but the Lord having ordained, that Nebuchadnezzar, who was the *chosen instrument of divine vengeance*, should, on that account, rule over the kings of the earth, commanded Jeremiah to put a yoke and bands on his neck, as a *significant sign*, calculated to give force to his predictions; and it is likely the prophet *offered* them successively to all the foreign ambassadors mentioned above, in order to prove whether they would give credit to the *word of God* thus solemnly pronounced or not; but we have reason to suppose, that they rejected them with disdain. Soon after, on some occasion, Zedekiah sent ambassadors to Babylon, with a view, as is supposed, to keep up a good understanding with Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah having had a remarkable vision * and other revelations respecting the restoration of the Jews to their native land took this opportunity of sending a letter, in order to guard those who were in captivity against the delusions of false prophets, who would have deterred them from building or doing any thing else for their own interest and welfare; he therefore informed them, that by the ordination of God, their captivity was to be of seventy years continuance; and that the people left in Jerusalem, could be of little use to assist in

* Jer. xxiv.

JEREMIAH'S LETTER. 257

their deliverance, because God in a short time, would afflict *them* with the sword, famine, and pestilence, &c. and as to their false prophets, he told them they would be soon destroyed: we have reason to think that Jeremiah's predictions concerning Ahab and Kolaiah, (two pretended prophets) were soon fulfilled, and that they were actually roasted in the fire, by the command of Nebuchadnezzar, for hindering the people from settling where he had planted them.

SECT.

S E C T. XL.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

AND it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying,

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon.

And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah that went into Babylon, saith the LORD; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

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JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY. 259

Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,

Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;

The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old, prophesied both against many countries and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the LORD hath truly sent him.

Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it.

And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD,
even

260 JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY.

even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the prophet, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him; and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now Hananiah, The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lye.

Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth, this year shalt thou die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

HANANIAH'S DEATH. 261

So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

You find, my dear, that there were also at Jerusalem false prophets, who flattered the king with hopes of deliverance from the power of Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah was, however, inexcusable, for giving credit to them, because none of their predictions had ever been fulfilled; whereas, Jeremiah was famous for the completion of his prophecies. One would have supposed that the death of Hananiah, which happened in two months afterwards, would at least have awakened the king's attention.

In the fifth year of Zedekiah's reign, Ezekiel being among the captives at Babylon, was called to be a prophet, and had many very wonderful visions; but they are in general, too difficult for your comprehension; therefore it is sufficient at present to say, that they agreed with those of Jeremiah.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS.

Cyaxares, king of Media, after he had reigned forty years, died; and Astyages, his son, (called in scripture Ahafuerus) succeeded him.

In the same year also died Psammis, king of Ethiopia; and Apies his son reigned in his stead: he is in scripture called Pharaoh-Hophra: a little before this time Jeremiah prophesied heavy judgments on Babylon, and redemption to Israel; these * predictions

* Jer. l, li.

the prophet wrote in a book, and delivered it to Seraiah, the brother of Baruch, who was then sent to Babylon by Zedekiah, commanding him that when he should come to Babylon, he should there read it upon the banks of the river Euphrates; and when he had made an end of reading it, he should bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the river; to denote, that as that should sink, so should Babylon also sink, and never rise again. These prophecies you will read in another part of this history.

S E C T.

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S E C T. XLI.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people.

But the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel, saying, As I live saith the LORD God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons.

Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.

Therefore thus saith the LORD God, As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespasssed against me.

And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered towards all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

But Zedekiah stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD GOD of Israel.

Moreover, all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much, after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

And the LORD GOD of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-place:

But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was in the seventh year of his reign, that Zedekiah sent ambassadors into Egypt, to make a confederacy with Pharaoh-Hophrah, king of Egypt. You find, my dear, that Zedekiah committed a great crime in breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar; for he was guilty of perjury by the violation of his oath, and acted dishonourably in breaking his treaty: he was likewise presumptuous and foolish to the last degree, in opposing the commands of God, so particularly addressed to him for his preservation, and provoking such judgments from Divine Justice.

Nebuchadnezzar, hearing that Pharaoh-Hophra was coming to the relief of Jerusalem, raised the siege, and went with his army to intercept him; on the departure of the Chaldeans, Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah, who had been set at liberty, to enquire of the LORD by him, and intreat him to pray for the king and people. The prophet informed him, "that Pharaoh's army would return to Egypt, and the Chaldeans would come against the city and take it; therefore it was in vain to deceive themselves, saying, they would not come up*."

While the Chaldeans were absent from Jerusalem, Jeremiah, intending to retire to † Anathoth his native place to avoid the siege, which he knew would be renewed, was seized as a deserter, and again thrown into prison.

The Egyptians, terrified with the appearance of the Chaldeans, withdrew their forces, and retired into their own country; treacherously leaving Zedekiah and his people, to perish in the war which they had drawn them

* Jer. xxxvii. 7.

† Ibid. 11.

266 EBED-MELECH'S KINDNESS.

into. Upon * which the prophet Ezekiel reproached them, in the name of the LORD, for breaking their solemn treaty; denounced judgments upon them, and foretold that they should sink low, become a mean people, and no more have a king of their own to reign over them; which accordingly came to pass: for about forty years afterwards Egypt was subdued, and became a province to the Persian empire, and has been governed by strangers ever since; and is at this time part of the Turkish empire.

On the retreat of the Egyptians, Nebuchadnezzar again renewed the siege of Jerusalem. Upon † this Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah out of prison to console him: Jeremiah took this opportunity of remonstrating with the king on the hardships which were so unjustly inflicted on him, and he was prevailed on to mitigate his punishment.

The prophet at this time repeated his prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which ‡ enraged some of the princes and chief commanders to such a degree, that they caused him to be thrown into a dungeon, where he must have perished miserably, but for the kindness of Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, who informed the king of his unhappy situation, and obtained an order to draw him up out of the dungeon.

After this Zedekiah || sent for Jeremiah into the Temple, and enquired secretly of him; when the prophet earnestly entreated the king to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, but he slighted his advice, and never consulted him again.

* Ezekiel xxix.

† Jer. xxxvii. 17.

‡ Jer. xxxviii. 1.

|| Jer. xxxviii. 14.

S E C T. XLII.

CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDKIAH KING
OF JUDAH.

AND the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

And on the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night, by the way of the gate, between two walls, which is by the king's garden; now the Chaldees were against the city round about, and the king went the way toward the plain.

And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah: and they gave judgment upon him.

And they slew the sons of Zedekiah, before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

And all the army of the Chaldees that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away.

But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen.

And the pillars of bras that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the bras of them to Babylon.

And

And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

And the fire pans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away.

The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door.

And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city.

And Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The city was so closely besieged, that the inhabitants were on the point of perishing with famine; Zedekiah therefore resolved to make a desperate attempt to escape in the night, by breaking through the camp of the enemy; but you find, was soon seized by the Chaldeans, and carried to the king of Babylon, who was then at Riblah, a city in Syria, near to Judea, where he was punished for his rebellion and breach of covenant, in the severe manner related in the former part of this section.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, had foretold the fate of Zedekiah in a very circumstantial manner. Ezekiel's prophecy was delivered in the name of the LORD in these words:—"I * will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he die there." Jeremiah predicted as follows:—"He † shall be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes." Both which were literally fulfilled.

Nebuchadnezzar certainly had cause to be enraged with Zedekiah for his treacherous behaviour, but was guilty of great inhumanity. The king of Judah might have avoided the dreadful effects of his wrath, would he have hearkened to the admonitions of the prophets;

* Ezek. xii. 13.

† Jer. xxxii. 4.

but he mocked the messengers of his God, and despised the word of the LORD. It is to be hoped, that misfortunes at length humbled his soul into a state of penitence, and that before he died, he made his peace with God, "*who could abundantly pardon.*"

Nebuzar-adan executed the command of his sovereign with the utmost rigour, and robbing the Temple of the remainder of its valuable treasures, set fire to that noble edifice which Solomon had built with so much cost and magnificence; which had been the glory of the whole earth; frequently honoured by the visible PRESENCE of the LORD JEHOVAH, from whence he had graciously received the sacrifices and prayers of his faithful servants, and given them assurances of his favour and loving-kindness!

That palace in which the king sat on a golden throne, and received the homage of many monarchs, was reduced to ashes! The houses of the nobles, stripped of the costly furniture which adorned them, were levelled with the earth! The strong fortresses of Sion, which when defended by an Almighty arm, were impregnable to the united force of all the nations of the world, fell also at the command of Nebuchadnezzar, for the LORD had forsaken them! The king languished in the horrors of a dungeon; "the judge, the priest, the captain of fifty, the honourable man, the counsellor, the eloquent orator, the artificer, bowed down to the slaughter! The proud looks of the daughters of Zion, those who had arrayed themselves in crimson, and decked themselves with ornaments of gold, were abased: they that fed delicately, were desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in

scarlet, embraced dunghills; they wept bitterly; their beauty became like a faded flower! To the matrons of Israel happened two dreadful evils in one day, loss of children and widowhood; the young men fainted at the corners of the streets; the young children asked for bread, and no one broke it unto them; the tongue of the sucking child, cleaved to the roof of his mouth with thirst; they poured their souls into their mothers bosoms!" Thus fell the greatest part of the inhabitants of Judea, a prey to famine or the devouring sword; whilst the wretched residue were either led into captivity laden with chains, or left deprived of their inheritance, to till the ground with slavish toil for their triumphant conquerors.

Had Israel continued faithful to the LORD, the impious hand that should have presumed to lift the flaming brand against his *Holy Temple*, would have perished in the attempt; those who attacked the city, would have been driven away with disgrace; the LORD HIMSELF would have fought against them with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm; but the house of Jacob "*changed the ordinance of God, and broke the everlasting covenant*: they burnt incense unto the host of heaven, the children gathered wood, and the fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded the dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, that they might provoke the LORD to anger; enflaming themselves with idols, under every green tree, slaying the children to Moloch in the vallies under the cliffs of the rocks. The prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bare rule by their means, and the people loved to have it so; they had no delight in

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THE SINS OF JUDAH. 273

the word of the LORD; they hallowed not the sabbath-day, but bear burdens on the sabbath-day; they deceived every one his neighbour, they taught themselves to speak lies, and trusted to oppression and perverseness; therefore the LORD covered SION with a cloud in his anger, and cast down unto the earth the beauty of Israel *!"

* What I have said above, concerning the miseries of the siege of Jerusalem, is chiefly collected from the predictions of the prophets; for I consider them as the most authentic *historians*, since the Divine Being by whom they were inspired, knew with the greatest certainty what *would* happen; and as we have had occasion to observe the *literal* completion of many circumstances in the prophecies, there is reason to believe that the rest were fulfilled.

S E C T. XLIII.

THE HISTORY OF JEREMIAH, AND OF THE JEWS
WHO WERE LEFT IN JUDEA.

NOW Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,

Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm: but do unto him, even as he shall say unto thee.

And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth

seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.

Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikim the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

Go, and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.

But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.

For I will surely deliver thee; and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the preservation of Jeremiah, we have a remarkable instance *, that the wrath of man is often made to advance the temporal prosperity of the righteous. The violence with which wicked men pursued their resentment against this good prophet, might make his predictions known to Nebuchadnezzar, and so engage him in his favour. The attempts of malice to blacken and defame him, brought forth his character with more advantage to the view of impartial beholders; and his imprisonment, proved the means of saving him from the more dreadful calamities which had befallen the other inhabitants of Judea.

Gedaliah, who was made governor over the wretched remainder of the Jews, was the son of that Abikam†, who had on a former occasion, shewn such kindness to Jeremiah; and it is probable, that he was appointed to this trust, in consequence of the prophet's recommendation.

“ After ‡ Nebuchadnezzar was returned to Babylon, all those Jews, who for fear of the Chaldeans had taken refuge amongst neighbouring nations, or who had hid themselves in the fields and deserts after their

* Dr. Blair's sermon on the divine government of the passions of men. † Jer. xxvi. 24. ‡ Prideaux's Connection. See Jer. xl, xli.

escape, on the disperſion of Zedekiah's army on the plains of Jericho, hearing that Gedaliah was made governor of the land, reſorted to him; and on his promiſing to give them protection, and taking an oath that they ſhould be ſafe under his government, they ſettled themſelves again in the land, and gathered in the fruits of it. The chief among theſe, were Johonan and Jonathan, the ſons of Kareah; Seraiah, the ſon of Tanhumuth; Azariah, the ſon of Haſhaiah; Iſhmael, the ſon of Nethaniah; and others."

Iſhmael was related to the royal family, and therefore planned a deſign of making himſelf king of the land: with this view he formed a conſpiracy againſt Gedaliah, in which he engaged Baalis, the king of Ammon; but Johonan, the ſon of Kareah, having got intelligence of it, he and all the chief men went to Gedaliah, and informed him of his danger, which they propoſed to prevent by killing Iſhmael: Gedaliah being conſcious of his own integrity, and naturally of a benign and generous diſpoſition, could not believe, that a man he had never injured, would harbour ſuch treacherous deſigns againſt him, therefore continued to conſide in the friendſhip of Iſhmael; who ſhortly after, paid him a viſit with ten of his companions, at a time when the people were gathering in the fruits of the land, and conſequently diſperſed in diſtant places. Gedaliah, free from ſuſpicion, kindly invited them to his table; when in the miſt of the feſtive entertainment, which his generoſity had provided for their reſreſhment, Iſhmael ſmote him with the ſword, and ſlew him, and afterwards killed a great number of the Jews and Chaldeans who were in Mizpah, and took
the

the rest captive: the next day hearing of eighty men who were going to Jerusalem on a religious account, to offer sacrifices at the place where the Temple formerly stood, Ishmael intercepted them, and murdered the whole number excepting ten, who, for the redemption of their lives, agreed to give up the treasures of wheat, and of barley, of oil, and of honey, which they had, agreeably to the usual custom in times of danger, hid in pits which they had dug and covered over in the field. Amongst the captives whom Ishmael took, were some of the late king's daughters, whom Nebuzar-adan, the Babylonian general, had committed to the care of Gedaliah; with these and the rest of his prisoners, he went towards the land of the Ammonites, with a view to get a reinforcement there, to assist him in his purpose of obtaining the government over the land of Israel. But when Johanan, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of the evil which he had wrought, they assembled their men, in order to punish him for his treachery; the captives who were with Ishmael, having intelligence of their design, made their escape from him, and joined their brethren; but Ishmael being informed of Johanan's approach, fled with all possible speed (accompanied with eight men) to the Ammonites, on which Johanan collected together the remnant of the people, who had been under the government of Gedaliah; and not thinking themselves safe at Mizpah, they removed to Bethlehem, with an intention to go into Egypt; but stopped at that place, in order to consult the prophet Jeremiah, who answered them as you will read in the following section.

S E C T. XLIV.

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY TO THE MEN OF JUDAH
WHO WERE LEFT IN THE LAND.

AND it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.

Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest.

And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him ;

If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up : for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.

Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid ; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD : for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

Bu

But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,

Saying, No: but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell:

(And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah, Thus saith the LORD of hosts the GOD of Israel, If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there)

Then it shall come to pass, that the sword which ye feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.

So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth
upon

upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt; and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.

For ye dissembled in your hearts when ye sent me unto the LORD your GOD, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our GOD: and according unto all that the LORD our GOD shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

And now I have this day declared it to you: but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your GOD, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you.

Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go, and to sojourn.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

You find, my dear, that the infinite mercy of God would have been extended to the Jews who remained in the land, if they would have reformed their lives, and submitted to the divine commands; but notwithstanding they had seen desolation spread far and near, by famine, sword, and fire; and had greatly felt the effects

effects of these calamities, which had been long threatened for the impiety and disobedience of the nation, they remained irreclaimable.

They pretended indeed, to be desirous of conducting themselves in conformity to the divine will; but the generality of them were *insincere*, which occasioned the prophet to reprove them in the name of God, (who knoweth what passes in the secret recesses of the mind) for their abominable hypocrisy.

The leaders of this wretched band of fugitives, Azariah and Johanan, with other proud and arrogant men, reproached the prophet with falshood, and said that he had not been inspired by God to address them in these terms, but spake by the instigation of Baruch the son of Neriah; they therefore persisted in their purpose, and compelled him and Baruch to accompany them into Egypt, where they arrived with all their company. A short time afterwards, the *word of the LORD* came unto Jeremiah, commanding him to prophesy *, “ that Nebuchadnezzar should subdue the land of Egypt; and that as the remnant of Judah, who had taken shelter in this land, refused, like their forefathers, to be admonished for their good, and presumptuously imitated them in the sins, for which the LORD had been provoked to destroy them; God *would set his face against those also for evil, and to cut them off, and would punish those who dwelt in Egypt, as he punished Jerusalem.* You will wonder to hear of their invincible obstinacy, but may read in the following section, that they had neither love nor fear of the SUPREME BEING, sufficient to incline them to return to their duty.

* Jer. xlv.

S E C T. XLV.

THE PRESUMPTION AND IMPIETY OF THE REM-
NANT OF JUDAH WHO RETIRED INTO THE
LAND OF EGYPT.

THEN all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem : for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things,
and

and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?

Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying,

The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind?

So that the LORD could no longer bear because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed: therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant as at this day:

Because ye have burnt incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his

his testimonies, therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt;

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The LORD GOD liveth.

Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword, and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

Yet

Yet a small number that escape the sword, shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine or theirs.

And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life: as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon his enemy, and that fought his life.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

One could scarcely have supposed, that any people would have acted in a manner so inconsistent with the light of reason, as to pay adoration to *inanimate things*; but for the Jews to do so, who had been so often favoured with divine revelations, is quite astonishing; especially, after they had beheld such signal judgments inflicted on their country, and were so kindly invited to render themselves objects of mercy by repentance and obedience.

The queen of heaven, to whom the Israelites paid adoration, is supposed to have been the moon; I need not enlarge on the folly of idolizing this planet, as I am sure, my dear, you see the absurdity of it; and must think those Jews who did so, were deserving of the punishments denounced against them.

Sacred history makes no mention of Jeremiah after this period, but it is most likely that he died in Egypt soon after. We find, in the collection of his prophecies, a number of predictions respecting other nations; against whom he was commanded to denounce the judgments of God for their wickedness, particularly the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites; he likewise foretold the *redemption of Israel*, of which I shall take notice in a subsequent part of this history.

Now you have read of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the punishments inflicted on the inhabitants of Judea, we must next look back to those who were carried captive into Babylon.

S E C T. XLVI.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS WHO WERE CARRIED
CAPTIVE INTO BABYLON—OF THE PROPHET
DANIEL—AND, OF KING NEBUCHADNEZ-
ZAR.

IN the third year of the reign of Jehoia-
kim king of Judah, came Nebuchadne-
zar king of Babylon unto Jerufalem, and
besieged it.

And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of
Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels
of the house of God : which he carried into
the land of Shinar to the house of his god ;
and he brought the vessels into the treasure-
house of his god.

And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the
master of his eunuchs, that he should bring
certain of the children of Israel, and of the
king's feed, and of the princes ;

Children in whom was no blemish, but
well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and
cunning in knowledge, and understanding
science, and such as had ability in them to
stand in the king's palace, and whom they
might teach the learning and tongue of the
Chaldeans.

And

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar: and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort?

then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

And at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat a portion of the king's meat.

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Now

Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

And the king communed with them: and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore stood they before the king.

And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The * prophet Daniel, who was descended from the royal family of David, was carried away in the first captivity, (which happened in the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah) together with his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. It † was at that time the custom among conquerors, to change the names of their captives. Those which were given to these four youths had a relation to the ideas of the Babylonians, as their former ones had to the true God. DANIEL, in the Hebrew tongue, signifies, *God is my judge*: BELTESHAZZAR, in the Chaldee, is, *the treasure of Baal*: HANANIAH, in Hebrew, *well-pleasing to God*: SHADRACH, in Chaldee, *the inspiration of the sun*: MI-

* Stackhouse on the Bible.

† Calmet's Dictionary.

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SHAEL, in Hebrew, *proceeding from GOD*: MESHACH, in Chaldee, *belonging to the goddess Shishac*: AZARIAH, in Hebrew, *GOD is my help*: ABED-NEGO, in Chaldee, the servant of *Nego*; that is, the *sun* or the *morning star*, both deities among the Babylonians, and so called because of their brightness.

The master of the eunuchs signifies, the person who had the controul of the king's household.

Daniel and his friends, though very young men, resolved steadfastly to adhere to the DIVINE LAW, and on no account to eat what that law prohibited to the Jews. They * had also, it is likely, another motive for refusing, which was the custom in most heathen nations of making an oblation to their gods, by pouring the liquor on the ground, and burning part of the meat, before they eat or drank, as an acknowledgment that all they had came from their bounty: so that every entertainment was a kind of sacrifice to idols, and therefore these pious youths, looked upon what came from the king's table as *unclean*.

The † learning of the Chaldeans chiefly consisted in what they called astrology, (or a knowledge of the motions of the sun, moon, and stars) the art of building, and the art of war: these branches of knowledge the Jews might lawfully learn, and therefore you find the young captives made great proficiency in them; and God ordained that their knowledge, which he enabled them to acquire to such a degree, should become a mean of procuring them that prosperity, which he had promised to those who should patiently endure their captivity, and preserve their principles from corruption in an

* Stackhouse.

† Ibid.

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MAGICAL ARTS.

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idolatrous country. Some of the Chaldeans professed to have skill in *magical arts*, but this was all deception; had it been real, it is very unlikely they would be willing to communicate to the worshippers of the LORD JEHOVAH, that knowledge which they pretended to derive from *idols*; for they made a *mystery* of it, even to the generality of their own countrymen. So that we may be certain, *magic* was not amongst the sciences which Daniel and his companions were taught; neither would those who refused the meat from the king's table, have submitted to be instructed by what means they might obtain inspiration from false deities.

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S E C T. XLVII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF NEBU-
CHADNEZZAR KING OF BABYLON, AND
THE HISTORY OF THE CAPTIVE JEWS.

AND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the forcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.

But

But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards, and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.

And the king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.

But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.

The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can

shew it before the king, except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain: and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.

He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.

Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah his companions;

That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Then

Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge unto them that know understanding.

He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.

Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him,

I have found a man of the captives of Judah that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

The king answered and said to Daniel whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king :

But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these :

As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed what should come to pass hereafter ; and he that revealeth secrets, maketh known unto thee what shall come to pass.

But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king,
and

and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass.

His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This is the dream: and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brasse, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken.

And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one

to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever :

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ; the great God hath made known to the king, what shall come to pass hereafter : and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.

The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a LORD of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him

him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

THE SUPREME BEING, who had appointed Nebuchadnezzar to be *his servant*, in respect to the judgments which his infinite wisdom saw fit to bring on different nations for their crimes, revealed unto him (in the visions of the night) what should happen afterwards; and that he might know it was not a common dream and disregard it, obliterated from his memory the particular circumstances of it; but impressed his mind with an earnest desire to recollect them, and to obtain, if possible, an interpretation: those who were distinguished by the denomination of *wise men*, had no knowledge beyond what may be acquired by human means, therefore it was utterly impossible for them to give the king any satisfaction. Nebuchadnezzar had not been accustomed to disappointment in his demands; and as some of the magicians had, on other occasions, pretended to supernatural skill, he condemned the whole body of them to instant death as a set of impostors; but the LORD graciously prevented their destruction, by revealing to Daniel that he should be enabled to tell the king the dream, and the interpretation thereof: when he had informed

his

his friends that he had engaged to do so, and enjoined them to offer up fervent prayers to God, he retired in order to prepare his mind for the divine inspiration which his faith encouraged him to expect, from the assurance he had already received, that God would reveal the matter to him. Whether Daniel was waking or asleep when the vision was revealed to him, is a point of no importance to us, since its agreement with Nebuchadnezzar's dream, proves that it proceeded from God.

When Daniel had returned thanks to God, he hastened to the king's presence, and addressing himself to the monarch as the messenger of the LORD, he related to him the dream, and the interpretation of it. I need not repeat the particular circumstances, as you have already read them; but shall inform you, that by the different *emblems of metals and stones*, God intended to signify to Nebuchadnezzar, the several *empires* that were to be in the world. The Assyrian or Chaldean is represented by *gold*, because it was the first, and the most magnificent, if not the most extensive; and Nebuchadnezzar being then on the throne, is said to be the head of it. That of silver, is the Persian; that of brass, the Grecian; that of iron, the Roman. When you read the history of these successive empires, you will see the wonderful completion of these prophecies. By the kingdom which was *never to be destroyed*, was meant the kingdom of the MESSIAH.

Nebuchadnezzar readily acknowledged his conviction that Daniel was actually acquainted with his dream, which he now perfectly recollected. Struck with astonishment at this amazing circumstance, he
readily

readily confessed, that Daniel's God, was God of gods, and Lord of kings; and he would even have paid divine honours to Daniel as his minister: Nebuchadnezzar was therefore inexcusable for continuing in idolatry, since the Lord *had revealed Himself to him, and furnished him with the means of information in respect to his duty*; for Daniel, without doubt, would have gladly instructed him: nothing therefore was wanting to compleat his conversion, but *a willing mind*.

This * event is supposed to have happened in the seventh year of Jehoiachim, before the siege of Jerusalem.

* Prideaux's Connection,

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S E C T. XLVIII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR, AND THE HISTORY OF THE CAPTIVE JEWS.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

That

That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye shall fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

And who so falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image.

And who so falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

There

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace: and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar,

nezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heat.

And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men
that

that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace*.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? they answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt: and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth in the midst of the fire.

And the princes, governors and captains, and the king's counsellors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies

* See the song of the three children, in the Apocrypha.

the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any God except their own God.

Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation and language which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Nebuchadnezzar, after his return from the Jewish war, and the conquest of Syria, commanded the golden statue you have now read of, to be erected in the plains of Dura; it was, including the pedestal, thirty yards

in height, and supposed to have been dedicated to *Bel* his idol.

This ambitious king, seems in the prosecution of his conquests, to have forgotten the **ALMIGHTY GOD**, who had revealed himself to him by the prophet *Daniel*, as you read in a former section.

The punishment of being thrown into a burning fiery furnace, was usual in Chaldea, and must have been very dreadful at any rate; but on this occasion, you find it was heated to an uncommon degree. *Shadrach Meshach*, and *Abed-nego*, notwithstanding the torments prepared for them, persisted in refusing to pay adoration to an idol; assuring themselves, that the **LORD** would sustain them in the fiery trial. You already know how miraculously they were delivered; but I beg you will remark their piety and noble confidence in the power, goodness, and faithfulness of **GOD**, who so wonderfully delivered them according to the promises he had repeatedly made, that he would never forsake those who were steadfast to their duty, and trusted in his word.

It is supposed, that by the *Son of God*, whom the king saw with *Shadrach*, *Meshach*, and *Abed-nego*, we may understand an angel; but it is of no consequence to search after the precise meaning of this particular expression, since it is evident, that it must have been by the power of the **LORD** that the fire was prevented from hurting them.

Nebuchadnezzar was once more convinced of the *omnipotence* of the **SUPREME BEING**: happy would it have been for him, if he had, from this conviction, forsaken idolatry, and continued to worship **GOD alone**.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF NEBU-
CHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON:
HIS CONQUESTS OVER THE HEATHEN NA-
TIONS, AGREEABLE TO THE PREDICTIONS
OF THE PROPHETS.

About * two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar went again into Syria, and laid siege to Tyre. It was a strong and wealthy city, which had never yet submitted to any foreign empire, and was at that time famous for its traffick and merchandize; by which several of its inhabitants had enriched themselves to such a degree, that they were able to vie with princes in splendor and magnificence. It was built by the Zidonians, two hundred and forty years before the building of the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar had great difficulties in subduing Tyre, which resisted him for thirteen years, but at length yielded to this mighty conqueror, who had been appointed by the LORD to punish the Tyrians for their accumulated wickedness; and by the downfall of this opulent and powerful city, were partly fulfilled the predictions concerning it, which are among the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: some of these I shall have occasion to shew you in another part of our history; it is therefore sufficient just to mention them at present.

Whilst Nebuchadnezzar lay at the siege of Tyre, Nebuzaradan, his general, being sent by him with part of his army, invaded the land of Israel, to take revenge, as is supposed, for the death of Gedeliah: in

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NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONQUESTS. 313

which expedition he carried away captive seven hundred and forty-five persons who remained in the land. Perhaps this small remnant had been restrained by the threatnings which Jeremiah denounced in the name of the LORD, against all those who should, in defiance of the divine command, go into Egypt; if so, we may regard their captivity as a *merciful* dispensation, since it proved the means of their being comfortably settled with the rest of their brethren in Babylon; and preserved them from the repeated molestation which they had reason to expect from different quarters, if they remained defenceless in Judea. By this captivity was fully compleated the desolation of the land, no more of its former inhabitants being now left in it, and all the numerous prophecies concerning it were amply fulfilled.

After this, Nebuzaradan marched against the Ammonites, and having destroyed Rabbah, their royal city, and made great desolation by fire and sword in that country, he carried their king, princes, and most of the powerful people of the land into captivity. This was done by the Babylonish general, to revenge the part they had taken in the murder of Gedaliah; who at the same time that he punished the Ammonites for this crime in particular, inflicted those judgments which the prophets had foretold should fall on them for their idolatry and wickedness*.

During the siege of Tyre, the other neighbouring nations, namely, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Zidonians, seem also to have been harassed and broken by the excursion of the Babylonians,

* Jer. xlix. Ezck. xxv. Zeph. ii.

314 JUDGMENTS ON PHARAOH-HOPHRA.

and to have had all those evils inflicted on them which were threatened in the name of the LORD by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel*.

In the fourteenth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel had many wonderful visions concerning the future state of the Church of GOD; but these are too difficult for you to consider as yet.

The same year the judgments which the prophets had denounced against Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, began to operate against him: great conspiracies were formed in that kingdom. The conquest of Tyre was in the mean time concluded: Nebuchadnezzar, after a siege of thirteen years continuance, made himself master of it, and utterly destroyed the place; but before it came to this extremity, the inhabitants had removed their effects into an island about half a mile distant from the shore, and there built them a new city; and therefore when Nebuchadnezzar entered that which he had so long besieged, he found but little to reward his soldiers: in revenge he rased the whole town to the ground, and slew all he found in it: after this it never rose to be any thing more than a village, known by the name of *old Tyre*; but the city on the island afterwards became famous, and was called *Tyre*.

Nebuchadnezzar and his army endured a variety of hardships and disappointments, in the service which the LORD appointed them against Tyre. God therefore by his prophet Ezekiel, promised them, as a reward, the spoils of Egypt: this prophecy was so remarkably fulfilled, that I will give it you in the prophet's own words.

* Isaiah xv, xvi. Jer. xlvii, xlviii, lxix. Ezek. xxv, xxxv.

Thus

EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY. 315

*Thus * saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.*

But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of the heaven.

And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou breakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee.

And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the LORD; because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it.

Behold therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.

And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste, shall be desolate, forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

Yet thus saith the LORD GOD, At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered.

And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom.

It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.

And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the LORD GOD.

And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel saying,

Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon: and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil,

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONQUESTS. 317

spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the LORD GOD.

By this prophecy, which was revealed to Ezekiel during the siege of Tyre, we may learn, that Nebuchadnezzar (though he knew it not) was the *servant of the LORD* in respect to the destruction of the different nations; they were *sinful*, and therefore *deserving of punishment*; he was *ambitious*, therefore a *fit instrument of their chastisement*; accordingly, the very next year immediately after the siege of Tyre, the king of Babylon taking advantage of the intestine divisions in Egypt, marched with his army thither, overrun the whole land, and made miserable devastation; slew multitudes of its inhabitants, and reduced the country to such a ruinous state, that it did not recover for forty years afterwards. Nebuchadnezzar having loaded himself and his army with the rich spoils of this country, and brought it into subjection to him, he came to terms with Amasis, who had revolted from Pharaoh-Hophra, and usurped the throne; and having confirmed him in the kingdom as his deputy, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon.

During this ravage of the land of Egypt, most of the Jews who had fled thither after the murder of Gedaliah, fell into the hands of the Babylonians; many of them they slew, others they took prisoners; the few that escaped, saved themselves by fleeing out of Egypt into different countries. After Nebuchadnezzar was gone out of Egypt, Pharaoh-Hophra collect-

ing together an army of foreigners, marched against Amasis, and gave him battle; in which being vanquished and taken prisoner, he was carried to his own palace in the city of Sais, and there strangled. By these events were compleated all the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, concerning him and his people; particularly that of Jeremiah respecting his death. It is said of this prince, by a heathen writer, that in the pride of his heart he vaunted that "*it was not in the power of God himself to dispossess him of his kingdom;*" which agrees with what Ezekiel charged him with, his saying *that the river was his, &c.* There are many other predictions concerning Egypt, among the writings of the prophets, but the examination of them would detain us too long from the history.

Nebuchadnezzar being now at rest from all his wars, and in full peace at home, applied himself to the finishing of his buildings at Babylon; he increased the magnificence of the city to such a degree, that it became one of the wonders of the world; but I shall not enter into a particular description of it, because it is not material now, and you will read it when you study prophane history.

Elated with his riches, power, and grandeur, he began to fancy himself a god, till he was awakened to a sense of his imperfections, as you will read in the following section.

S E C T. XLIX.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF NEBU-
CHADNEZZAR—HIS CONFESSION OF THE
OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD—AND HIS OWN RE-
LATION OF A WONDERFUL DREAM—ITS IN-
TERPRETATION AND COMPLETION.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king
unto all people, nations, and lan-
guages that dwell in all the earth; Peace be
multiplied unto you.

I thought it good to shew the signs and
wonders that the high God hath wrought
toward me.

How great are his signs! and how mighty
are his wonders! his kingdom is an ever-
lasting kingdom, and his dominion is from
generation to generation.

I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine
house, and flourishing in my palace:

I saw a dream which made me afraid, and
the thoughts upon my bed and the visions
of my head troubled me.

Therefore made I a decree to bring in all
the wise men of Babylon before me, that
they might make known unto me the inter-
pretation of the dream.

Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying,

O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.

The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.

The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

I saw

I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher, and an holy one came down from heaven.

He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.

Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field: and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him.

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. - Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all

the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;

Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and
saying,

faying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it: yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field till seven times pass over him.

This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots: thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor: if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grafs as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grafs as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds claws.

And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lift up mine eyes unto heaven, and
mine

mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords fought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

For a long succession of years Nebuchadnezzar experienced scarcely any thing but success and exaltation: prosperity had the effect it usually has on irreligious minds,

326 NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S MADNESS.

minds, for it made him proud and arrogant to the greatest degree; the LORD therefore knowing that he was not incorrigibly wicked, sent afflictions to teach him (and the world by his example) how mean and abject the highest monarch is, in comparison of the Supreme Being.

How it came about that Nebuchadnezzar did not apply first to Daniel, is uncertain; but we may suppose he was absent from Babylon at that time, and the king imagined the magicians could interpret for him, as he was able to relate the dream to them. Daniel's exposition is very easy to be understood; therefore I need only inform you, that by the *watcher* or *holy one*, is supposed to be meant an angel, and that Nebuchadnezzar is thought to have been seized with sudden distraction of mind; and that during its continuance, he was in a most deplorable state, unfit for the society or converse of mankind, and levelled with the beasts who have no understanding. Whether he actually eat grass, or was restrained to a vegetable diet is uncertain; but from the scripture account of the extraordinary growth of his hair and nails, it is likely that he wandered from home in desert places till his reason was restored; at which time he returned to his kingdom, when his son, who had governed in his stead, resigned the throne to him, and his nobles gladly received him again, as he was honoured and respected by them. Nebuchadnezzar is said to have lived a year afterwards: he reigned between forty-three and forty-four years.

From Nebuchadnezzar's own words we may conclude, that he at length became a convert to the LORD,

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SS. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONVERSION. 327

LORD the only true God; various means had been employed to engage him to leave his idolatrous practices, and they proved at last effectual; and he had reason to bless the LORD for his humiliation, as in all probability it proved the means of saving his soul from perdition.

THE REIGNS OF EVIL-MERODACH, AND NERIGLISSAR, KINGS OF BABYLON. THE DEATH OF JEHOIACHIN, KING OF JUDAH; AND PART OF THE HISTORY OF CYRUS, THE FOUNDER OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE.

On the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, his son, succeeded to the kingdom of Babylon: as soon as he was settled in the throne, he released Jehoiachin king of Judah, who had lain in prison near thirty-seven years. * Evil-merodach promoted him to great honour in his palace, admitted him to his table, preferred him to all the monarchs, and other great personages, who occasionally attended the Babylonish court, and made him a daily allowance to furnish him with necessaries for the support of his dignity: whether this reverse of fortune in the Jewish monarch was sent by God as a reward for his penitence, we are not told; but it is agreeable to the usual dispensations of Providence, to suppose this was the case: nothing farther is said of Jehoiachin by the sacred historian, therefore it is imagined that he died shortly after.

On the death of Jehoiachin, Salathiel his son, became the nominal prince of the Jews in his stead; for after the loss of their authority, they still kept up the

* 2 Kings xxv.

328 EVIL-MERODACH'S REIGN.

title; and for a great many years there was always one of the house of David, who was honoured and acknowledged as a prince under the name of *the head of the captivity*; and had some kind of jurisdiction, consistent with the government they were under; which was sometimes ratified and confirmed by the kings of that country.

When Evil-merodach had reigned two years in Babylon, his crimes made him so hateful, that at length even his own relations conspired against him, and put him to death. Neriglissar, his sister's husband, who was at the head of this conspiracy, reigned in his stead.

In the same year that Evil-merodach was slain, died Astyages, king of Media; he was succeeded by his son Darius, who divided his authority with Cyrus the son of Cambyfis, king of Persia, and Mandane, the daughter of Astyages. Cyrus at this time was forty years of age, and * Darius was forty-one.

Neriglissar, king of Babylon, on his coming to the crown, made great preparations for a war with the Medes. Darius gaining intelligence of this, sent for Cyrus out of Persia to his assistance, and on his arrival with thirty thousand Persians, Darius made him general of the Medes, and sent him with the joint forces of both nations, to make war against Neriglissar; and from this time Cyrus was reckoned king over both nations, though he was in reality no more than commander in chief of the confederate army under the king of Media; but after the death of this monarch, he succeeded to his crown, as he did to his father's in the kingdom of Persia; which,

* This prince is in profane history called Cyaxares.

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APPOINTMENT OF CYRUS. 329

with the countries he had conquered, made up the Persian empire, of which he was the founder and first monarch.

Cyrus was appointed by the LORD to restore Israel to their native land; and Isaiah, many years before, prophesied of him by name. In order to keep up the spirits of the people whilst in captivity, encourage their faith and trust in God, and preserve them from idolatrous practices, the LORD graciously revealed to them, at different times, by means of his prophets, that he would, at the end of seventy years, bring them back to Judea; that they should rebuild their city, and once more be in a prosperous condition. They also predicted that Babylon should be subdued, as it had subdued other nations: these prophecies are very remarkable, and you shall read some of them in the ensuing section.

SECT.

S E C T. L.

PART OF THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

SING, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel,

Thus saith the LORD thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself:

That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad: that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

That confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

That

That faith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd,
and shall perform all my pleasure; even
saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and
to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to
Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to
subdue nations before him, and I will loose
the loins of kings; to open before him the
two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be
shut:

I will go before thee, and make the crook-
ed places straight: I will break in pieces
the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars
of iron.

And I will give thee the treasures of dark-
ness, and hidden riches of secret places, that
thou mayest know that I the LORD, which
call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel
mine elect, I have even called thee by thy
name: I have furnished thee, though thou
hast not known me.

I am the LORD, and there is none else,
there is no god besides me: I girded thee,
though thou hast not known me.

That they may know from the rising of
the sun, and from the west, that there is none
besides

besides me, I am the LORD, and there is none else.

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these things.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry, and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governors shall proceed from the midst of them: and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

And

And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Cyrus was a very extraordinary person in the age he lived in, renowned for wisdom, valour, and virtue; but his greatest encomium is, that he was thought worthy by the LORD to dispense his blessings to the house of Jacob. Neriglissar hearing that Cyrus was coming against him with a very great army to the assistance of the Medes, sent ambassadors to Lydia, and other nations, to call them to his aid; after both parties had been for three years forming alliances, and making preparations for war, they, with their confederates, took the field. Neriglissar was slain, the Assyrian army routed, and Cyrus gained the victory.

Cræsus, king of Lydia, being next in dignity, took the command of the vanquished army, and made as good a retreat with it as he possibly could; but Cyrus overtook them, and entirely routed them, upon which Cræsus made the best of his way into his own country.

The death of Neriglissar was a great loss to the Babylonians, for he was a very learned and excellent prince.

Laborosoarchod, his son, succeeded him; he was in every thing the reverse of his father, and addicted himself to all kinds of wickedness, cruelty, and injustice. Cyrus gained great advantages during the reign of this king, who was killed about nine months after he came to the crown by the conspiracy of his own people; after him succeeded Belshazzar, who is supposed to have been grandson to Nebuchadnezzar, and son

son to Evil-merodach; he was very young when he ascended the throne, and of a dissolute turn of mind; but his mother Nitocris was a woman of excellent understanding, and a masculine spirit; therefore whilst her son devoted himself entirely to his pleasures, she undertook the principal part of the government, and did all that human prudence could suggest for the preservation of the kingdom. Nitocris used her utmost endeavours to fortify the country against the Medians; but Cyrus made great progress in taking fortresses, towns, and provinces; therefore the king of Babylon went into Lydia, and there formed a considerable confederacy by hiring auxiliary forces, over which he appointed Croesus general, who went against the enemy; but Cyrus put him to flight, and he returned to Sardis, where the conqueror closely besieged him, and after a short time took the city, made him prisoner, and condemned him to death, but was induced by compassion to spare his life. Cyrus was so successful in arms, that he conquered several other nations; and having greatly enlarged his dominions, again entered Assyria, and marched on towards Babylon, that being the only place in the east which held out against him, and having overthrown Belshazzar in a battle, shut him up in his capital: this happened in the sixteenth year of Belshazzar's reign. The Babylonian empire was now drawing to a conclusion, and the judgments of God ready for execution—but we will pursue the history as related by the prophet Daniel.

S E C T. LI.

THE REIGN OF BELSHAZZAR—THE FALL OF
THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE—CONTINUATION
OF THE HISTORY OF CYRUS.

BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

Belshazzar, whilst he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines might drink therein.

Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines drank in them.

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's

king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and the king spake and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house; and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever, let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

There

There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and in the days of thy father light, and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;

Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?

I have even heard of thee that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light, and understanding, and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known

unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing.

And I have heard of thee that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour.

And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.

But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from
his

his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grafs like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this:

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines have drank wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brasse, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.

Then was the part of the hand sent from him, and this writing was written.

And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN.

This is the interpretation of the thing; MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

TEKEL, thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

PERES, thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

I have already told you, my dear, that Belshazzar was both a weak and a wicked prince, and am sure you are now convinced that he deserved that character; for what wise king would have been revelling and feasting, when his city and kingdom were on the very brink of ruin? and what wickedness could exceed the sacrilegious act he committed, in profaning the sacred vessels in so contemptuous a manner? short was the triumph of his impious mirth! the sentence of his condemnation appeared in legible characters, and

struck

struck his guilty mind with astonishment and terror, even before he knew the purport of them.

Daniel, it is probable, (having received no particular command from the LORD to go to Belshazzar) kept at a distance from this scene of riot and profaneness; perhaps he was gone to rest, or engaged in prayer; or he might, though reckoned among the *wise men*, stay away, as the king sent only for the *magicians* and *astrologers*.

The queen, who entered the banqueting-room, was Nitocris, the king's mother, who was called *queen* by way of eminence, because she had the management of the kingdom; Belshazzar being so entirely inattentive to it, that he did not even know Daniel, though he was one of the ministers of state; but Nitocris, who constantly employed him, knew him well; and perhaps, it was by his advice, that she governed with so much wisdom and prudence, and preserved the kingdom to her son for so many years.

You have already read the meaning of the words *Mene, &c.* but I must inform you, that *Peres* has the same signification as *Upharfin*.

Cyrus found the siege of Babylon a very difficult work at first, for the walls were high and impregnable, the city was well furnished with men, and fully supplied with all kinds of provisions for twenty years, as they had a great deal of void grounds within their walls, both for pasture and tillage; and therefore the inhabitants thinking themselves secure, defied and derided Cyrus from their bulwarks; however, he persisted for near two years, till at length gaining intelligence that a great annual festival was to be kept at Babylon,

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on which it was usual for the Babylonians to spend the whole night in drunkenness and riot; he thought it a proper time to surprize them, which he did by breaking down a bank or dam that was between the river and a famous canal; by which means he drained the river so, that it soon became fordable, and two parties of soldiers marching by the channel of it, and finding the gates open, they entered and advanced to the palace, where they slew the king. The inhabitants soon yielded to the conqueror, and Cyrus became master of the place; and thus concluded his conquests, after a war of twenty-one years. His victories were so extensive, that his empire was the greatest that had ever been in Asia; and to the honour of Cyrus it is related, that he conquered still more by his humanity and courtesy, than by his sword.

Thus ended the famous Babylonish empire, after it had continued from the reign of Nabonassar two hundred and nine years, just fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem.

I will now let you read the prophecies which Jeremiah * commanded to be recited by Seraiah, on the banks of the Euphrates, many years before. The prophet received such a clear revelation concerning the downfall of Babylon, that he wrote as if he had been an actual spectator of the scene.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH CONCERNING BABYLON.

The word that the LORD spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

* Jer. l. li.

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JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY. 343

Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart both man and beast.

In those days and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going, and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their GOD.

They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.

All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not; because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice; even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

For lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

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And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.

Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD.

Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down, for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

Israel is a scattered sheep: the lions have driven him away; first, the king of Assyria hath devoured him: and last, this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.

And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.

Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about: let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.

Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the LORD GOD of hosts; for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee.

And the most proud shall stumble, and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

Their redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not show mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.

The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and bitter pangs.

At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men as with caterpillars: and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

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When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyeth all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz, appoint a captain against her, cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.

Prepare against her the nations with the king of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion.

The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed, they became as women: they have burned her dwelling-places; her bars are broken.

One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end.

And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

Therefore, behold, the days come that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burnt with fire: and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

This is the word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriab, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. And this Seraiah was a quiet prince.

So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon.

And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words;

Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.

And it shall be when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:

And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary.

You find that it was particularly foretold, that Babylon should be shut up and besieged by the Medes, Elemites, and Armenians. That the river should be dried. That the city should be taken in the time of a feast, whilst her princes and her wise men, her captains and her rulers, were drunken; and that they should be made to sleep a perpetual sleep, from which they should never awake. I think the expression **I WILL MAKE DRUNK HER PRINCES, &c.** alludes to their drinking in the sacred vessels. I desire you will take notice, how particularly the captive Jews were warned to escape from Babylon, that they might avoid sharing these calamities. The remaining parts of the chapter which contain these prophecies relate to the *utter destruction* of the city, of which you will afterwards read, and then you shall peruse the predictions.

You already know that the king, who is called in scripture Darius, the Median, was Cyaxares; for Cyrus, as long as his uncle lived, allowed him a joint title in the empire, and yielded him the first place of honour in it, though it was gained by his own valour.

After Cyrus had settled his affairs in Babylon, he went to Persia; and in his return through Media, married the daughter of Darius, the Median; Darius then accompanied him to Babylon; on their arrival, they took counsel together for the settling the whole empire, as you will read in the following section.

S E C T. LII.

HISTORY OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE UNDER THE
JOINT GOVERNMENT OF DARIUS AND CYRUS.

IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom
an hundred and twenty princes which
should be over the whole kingdom ;

And over these three presidents ; of whom
Daniel was first : that the princes might give
accounts unto them, and the king should
have no damage.

Then this Daniel was preferred above the
presidents and princes, because an excellent
spirit was in him ; and the king thought to
set him over the whole realm.

Then the presidents and princes sought to
find occasion against Daniel concerning the
kingdom ; but they could find none occa-
sion nor fault ; forasmuch as he was faithful,
neither was there any error or fault found in
him.

Then said these men, We shall not find
any occasion against this Daniel, except we
find it against him concerning the law of his
God.

Then

Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house: and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree. Hast

thou

E. DANIEL CAST INTO THE LION'S DEN. 351

thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? the king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not.

Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

Then the king when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, know O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

And

And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him.

Then the king rose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?

Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was
taken

DANIEL'S ENEMIES DESTROYED. 353

taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives: and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came to the bottom of the den.

Then king Darius wrote unto all the people, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you.

I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

A N N O-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Daniel was renowned throughout the east country for his wisdom; and having great experience, was certainly a very proper person for the high office he was appointed to, having been employed full sixty-five years as prime minister under the kings of Babylon: however, the high station of chief of the presidents, which placed him next to the king in dignity, excited the envy of the courtiers, who concerted the cruel plot against him which you have just read of. Darius not suspecting their malicious designs, received their petition as a mark of loyalty, which made him inconsiderately comply with it. Cyrus was at that time gone to settle some affairs in Syria. I think you cannot fail of making proper reflections on this transaction, without my assistance.

A short time after this, Daniel*, computing that the seventy years of Judah's captivity were now drawing near to an end, prayed earnestly to God, to remember his people, and grant them restoration; on which he had some wonderful revelations, concerning the deliverance of the Jews from captivity: he had before, in the reign of Belshazzar, several visions relating to the fall of the Babylonian empire, and the fate of three other great monarchies that should arise after it; he has left us also some very exact predictions concerning the kingdom of Messiah.

“ By these † revelations God has manifested to the world, that grandeur, empire, and glory are his; that he bestows them on whomsoever he pleases, and with-

* Dan. ix.

† Rollin's Ancient History.

DANIEL'S PREDICTIONS. 355

draws them in like manner, to punish the abuse of them; we also learn from these revelations, that God's design in subjecting states to such astonishing revolutions, is to teach men that they are in his presence as nothing; that he is alone the MOST HIGH, the ETERNAL KING, the SOVEREIGN ARBITER, who acts as he pleases with supreme power, both in heaven and earth.

"God, to make these important truths still more sensible, shewed to Daniel in visions four dreadful beasts, rising from a vast sea, in which the four winds combat together with fury; and under these symbols he represents to the prophet, the origin, the characteristics, and fall of the four great empires which were to govern the world successively.

"The prophet then related more particularly, the character of each of these empires. After having represented the empire of the Babylonians under the image of a lioness, and that of the Medes and Persians, under the form of a bear, greedy of prey: he draws the picture of the Grecian monarchy, under the image of a spotted leopard with four heads and four wings: the Roman empire is then described under the image of a fourth beast, exceeding dreadful, with ten horns, and great iron teeth, stamping and devouring all before it." When you read the histories of these nations, you will find these symbols exactly agree with them.

About two years after Daniel's miraculous deliverance from the lions, Darius died, and Cambyſis, king of Persia, being also dead, Cyrus returned, and took upon him the government of the whole empire.

SECT.

S E C T. LIII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF CYRUS
—THE RETURN OF THE CAPTIVE JEWS TO
JERUSALEM.

NOW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD GOD of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth : and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? his GOD is with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD GOD of Israel (he is the GOD) which is in Jerusalem.

And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-

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will-offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised to go up, to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods ;

Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

All the vessels of gold, and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

Now

Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;

The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore.

Besides their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven; and there were among them two hundred singing-men and singing-women.

Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five;

Their camels four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place.

They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work, threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand

pounds

pounds of silver, and one hundred priests garments.

So the priests and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The seventy years captivity was now expired, and we may conclude, that the decree of Cyrus in favour of the Jews was obtained by Daniel; who to induce this king to grant his request, it is likely shewed him the prophecy of Hsaiah, in which he is expressly named, one hundred and fifty years before he was born, as you read in a former section *. It is also probable that Cyrus, when he saw in his journey into Syria so large a country as Judea lying waste and desolate, was moved with a desire to people it; and who so proper as its former inhabitants?

As soon as Cyrus had issued his decree, you find numbers of Jews assembled; their chief leaders were Zerubabel the son of Salathiel, the son of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and Jeshua the son of Joredach the high-priest. Not only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but remnants of the ten tribes who had been carried away by Tiglath-Pileser, Salmaneser, and Esarhaddon, still retained the worship of God; these, therefore, gladly took advantage of Cyrus's decree, for it extended not to JUDAH only, but to *all the house of ISRAEL*.

* Sect. xlix.

S E C T. LIV.

CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF CYRUS—THE
FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE LAID AT JE-
RUSALEM.

AND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.

And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt-offerings morning and evening;

They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

And afterward offered the continual burnt-offering, both of the new moons and of all the set feasts of the LORD, that were conse-

PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE. 361

crated; and of every one that willingly offered a free-will-offering unto the LORD.

From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil unto them of Sidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa; according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upwards, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad,

with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

And they sung together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy;

So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It required time to collect materials, and engage workmen, therefore the first year was employed in these necessary preparations; but early in the second the foundation was laid, which was done with great solemnity. It is supposed, that during the time the Temple was building, a Tabernacle was set up, as in the days of David.

Whilst the Jews were carrying on the work, the Samaritans, who were planted in several cities of Israel in the room of the Israelites, whom Shalmanezar, king of Assyria, carried away captive, desired to join with them in the work; but neither the governors nor chiefs of the families of Israel would consent, being apprehensive that they were no better than idolators, notwithstanding they professed to worship the God of *Israel*: this refusal exasperated the Samaritans, who did their utmost to obstruct the work; and though they could not alter the decree of Cyrus, yet, by bribing his ministers, they, in a great measure, defeated its effect, so that for several years the building went on but slowly; these disputes gave rise to that enmity which afterwards subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans.

It is supposed, that on this occasion Daniel gave himself up to prayer, and had some of those wonderful visions I mentioned in a former section*, and it is thought he died soon after. You are already acquainted with the principal events of this good man's

* Section 1.

364 THE DEATH OF DANIEL.

life, and therefore I need not enlarge on his character; it is sufficient to remark, that he was universally esteemed and renowned for his wisdom and amiable disposition; for he devoted his heart to God in his youth, and obtained the blessing of the Lord, who from a captive, made him a prince, and distinguished him with his divine favour to the last.

By the death of Daniel, the Jews having lost a powerful advocate in the Persian court, their enemies took advantage of them, and succeeded in some of their designs against them; but as the people were able to work, and had the assistance of the Zidonians in respect to labour and materials, they proceeded, though not with such expedition as they would have done if, the decree of the king of Persia had been allowed to have its full influence.

In the seventh year after the restoration of the Jews, died Cyrus, their great benefactor, having reigned from his first taking on him the command of the Persian and Median armies, thirty years; from his taking of Babylon, nine years; and from being sole monarch of the east, after the death of his uncle Darius, seven years; being at the time of his death, seventy years old.

After Cyrus, who was you know, the founder of the Persian monarchy, there were twelve successive monarchs. Cambyfes, Smerdis Magus, Darius Hytaspes, Xerxes the first, Artaxerxes Longimanus, Xerxes the second, Sogdianus, Darius Nothus, Artaxerxes Menanion, Artaxerxes Ochus, Arses, and Darius Codomanus. The history of these kings has been transmitted to us, and you will have great pleasure in reading it; but

DANIEL'S PROPHECY. 365

at present, we must keep our attention fixed to *sacred history*. You have seen the completion of the prophecies respecting the Babylonian empire, I shall now inform you what Daniel predicted concerning Persia.

“ He * declares in precise terms, that after the three first kings, viz. Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius, a fourth monarch will arise, which is Xerxes, and that he will exceed all his predecessors in power and riches ; that this prince, puffed up with the idea of his own grandeur, which shall have rose to its highest pitch, will assemble all the people in his boundless dominions, and lead them to the conquest of Greece ; that among the Greeks shall arise a king, of a very different turn of mind from Xerxes. He shall be a bold, valiant monarch, shall succeed in all his enterprizes, and shall establish an irresistible power on the ruins of the vanquished nations. But at a time when he shall imagine himself most firmly seated on the throne, shall lose his life with the regal dignity, and not leave any posterity to succeed him in it. This new monarchy, losing on a sudden, the splendor and power for which it was renowned, shall divide itself towards the four winds of heaven ; from its ruins shall arise, not only four great kingdoms, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Macedon, but also several foreigners or barbarians shall usurp its provinces, and form kingdoms out of these.” There are several prophecies to the same effect, and they were exactly fulfilled ; from which we may learn, that “ the Supreme Being orders all things, though he conceals the operations of his wisdom, and the wonders of his providence, beneath the veil of natural causes.

* Dan. xi.

† Rollin's Ancient History.

and ordinary events." The WILL of man is left free, but the consequences of his actions are determined by God, for the punishment of vice, and reward of virtue.

We must now return to the history of the Jews; let us see what befel them in the reigns of the kings of Persia, after the death of Cyrus.

Cambyfes, who is in scripture called Ahasuerus*, being of a very different disposition from his father, the enemies of the Jews addressed themselves to him, in order to prevail with him to stop the building of the Temple; but it seems he had too much respect for the memory of his father, to be induced, publickly to revoke his decree; however, he defeated in a great measure the design of it, by several discouragements, so that it went on very slowly in his days.

The next king was Smerdis, who is called in scripture Artaxerxes†; as soon as he was settled on the throne, the Samaritans endeavoured to prejudice him against the Jews, as you will read in the following section.

* Ezra iv.

† Ibid.

S E C T. LV.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS AND SAMARITANS DURING THE REIGNS OF ARTAXERXES AND DARIUS HYSTASPES.

AND in the days of Artaxerxes, the Samaritans wrote letters unto the king.

This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river; and at such a time.

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

Be it known now unto the king, that if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute and custom, and so wilt thou endamage the revenue of the kings.

Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour; therefore have we sent and certified the king.

R 4

Then

That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

We certify the king, that if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

Then sent the king this answer: The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute and custom was paid unto them.

Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.

Take

Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Artaxerxes continued but eight months on the throne; after his death, Darius, the son of Hytaspes, a noble Persian, who had followed Cyrus in all his wars, was raised to the throne. Although by the death of Artaxerxes, his edict for stopping the building of the Temple was now at an end, yet the Jews, neglecting to resume the work, God smote the land with barrenness; but in the second year of Darius, being informed by the prophet Haggai, of the cause of this judgment, and exhorted to their duty, they again prepared for carrying on the work; and to encourage them, the same prophet was soon after sent with a gracious message to them, as follows:

In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying;

Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua the son of Josedech the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying;

370 ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY.

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua son of Josedech the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

This prophecy related to the Messiah, as I shall endeavour to explain in a proper place.

Shortly after, the prophet Zechariah was sent, who admonished them to repentance, as follows:

Thus saith the LORD: Turn unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

Be ye not as your fathers unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil

doings:

doings; but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.

The Jews thus reproved and encouraged, soon set about the building again, on which Haggai, in the name of the LORD, promised them deliverance, and a plentiful increase of all the fruits of the earth; and assured Zerubbabel of divine favour and protection.

In the beginning of the next year, the Samaritans finding that the building of the Temple again went on, applied to Tatnai, who was governor of Palestine and Syria, suggesting that the Jews proceeded without authority, and that it would tend to the prejudice of the king. But Tatnai being a man of justice and temper, enquired of the elders, and on their producing the decree of Cyrus, he wrote to the king, who caused the records to be searched, and the original decree was found, which Darius resolved to confirm, and commanded Tatnai to see it put in execution; decreeing, that whoever should obstruct it, might have his house pulled down, and be hanged on a gallows erected on the spot; the king likewise granted a sum of money towards defraying the expence of the building of the Temple.

The publishing of this decree, completed the restoration of the Jewish state: from the destruction of which, by the burning of the city and Temple at Jerusalem, to this time, was exactly seventy years.

The work of the building now went on very successfully; and as the state was so thoroughly restored, the Jews who resided in Persia, thought it might not be proper to keep the fasts, which they had for seventy years observed, on account of its destruction, and there-

372 ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY.

fore sent messages to Jerusalem, to which they received the following answer from the LORD, by the mouth of the prophet Zechariah :

And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassion, every man to his brother ;

And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor ; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Thus saith the LORD, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem : and Jerusalem shall be called, A city of truth : and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, The holy mountain.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.

And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, shall it also be marvellous in mine eyes ? saith the LORD of hosts.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country :

And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem : and they shall be my people, and I will be their GOD in truth and in righteousness.

BABYLONIANS REVOLT. 373

These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates;

And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour: and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and chearful feasts: therefore love the truth and peace.

This prophecy must have afforded great joy to the Jews, as it assured them of prosperity; but I beg you will observe, my dear, that they were strictly enjoined the practice of *moral actions*, without which, *ceremonial observances* were unacceptable.

In the beginning of the fifth year of Darius, the Babylonians revolted from him on account of his having removed the imperial seat to Shushan, and therefore they resolved to set up a king for themselves, and began to lay in provisions for a war; at length they broke into open rebellion; Darius besieged them, and knowing that they were not able to meet him in the field, they resolved to support themselves under a siege; and that their provisions might hold out, came to a desperate resolution to cut off all the useless part of the inhabitants; and therefore collecting together the women and children, they strangled them all, excepting only that each man was allowed to save one of his wives, and a maid servant to do the work of the house. The Israelites had been warned about two years before, to flee out of that land, that they might be delivered

374 DOWNFALL OF BABYLON.

livered from the plagues which were coming on it; and there is great reason to suppose they did so. Darius, in about a year and eight months took Babylon, and as soon as he was master of the place, he removed its hundred gates, and beat down its walls, reducing their height from two hundred cubits to thirty, and gave the inhabitants up for a spoil to the Persians, who had been their servants. He impaled three thousand of the most guilty, and pardoned the rest. It is to be observed, that the *punishment* of Babylon kept pace with the *restoration* of Judah, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah*; and they were subjected to the Persians, in the same manner as they had conquered and subjected the Jews. Babylon languished from this time, and at last came to utter desolation.

* Jer. xxv. 12, 13, 14.

S E C T.

S E C T. LVI.

THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM FINISHED AND
DEDICATED.

AND the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the GOD of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

And this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of GOD with joy,

And offered at the dedication of this house of GOD an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service

376 THE TEMPLE DEDICATED.

vice of God which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.

And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Israelites must undoubtedly have felt great joy at the dedication of the Temple. It was not in their power to adorn it in so magnificent a manner as Solomon's was, nor to celebrate its dedication with such numberless sacrifices; and it wanted advantages which the first enjoyed, particularly the *TOKEN of the DIVINE PRESENCE*, the *ARK of the COVENANT*, the *URIM and THUMMIM*, and the *HOLY FIRE* on the *ALTAR*; but they had a promise, "*that the glory of this Temple should exceed that of Solomon*, as you have read. You may observe, my dear, that there were twelve he-goats offered; from which we may understand, that some of *all the tribes* returned to Jerusalem, though that of Judah being the most numerous, they were denominated from it; and from this time, *ALL* the people began to be called *Jews*.

The

The Temple was twenty years in building: at the dedication of it the 146, 147, and 148th psalms are supposed to have been sung.

Cyrus and Darius had assigned the tribute due to them from Samaria, to be paid towards the building of the Temple, and furnishing the Jews with sacrifices; that oblations and prayers might be offered there, for the king and royal family, and the welfare of the Persian empire. This was a great mortification to the Samaritans, and they used their utmost endeavours to get rid of what they thought an indignity, but could not succeed; and, on pretence that the Temple was *finished*, they refused to let the Jews have the annual sum any longer; on which, complaint was made to Darius, and the Samaritans enjoined to pay it, as formerly.

Darius desirous of enlarging his empire, entered into India, and brought into subjection that large country, from which he annually received a considerable sum. Some years after, he invaded GREECE, but was repulsed with loss; he therefore resolved to make an invasion on it in person, and notwithstanding the Egyptians revolted from him, he persisted in his design, but determined to send a part of his forces to reduce Egypt. Darius was at this time a very old man, and as there was a contest amongst his sons about the succession, he thought it necessary to settle this point before he went on his expedition, and declared XERXES his successor. When all things were ready for the Grecian war, Darius fell sick and died, having reigned thirty-six years. He was a prince of wisdom, clemency and justice, and
you

you will have great pleasure in reading the whole of his history.

THE REIGN OF XERXES, KING OF PERSIA.

Xerxes, in the first year of his reign, carried on the preparations for the Grecian war: he confirmed to the Jews all the privileges granted to them by Darius, especially that of the tribute of Samaria. In the second year of his reign he subdued the Egyptians, and reduced them to a heavier yoke than before; elated with this success, he resolved upon a war with Greece, and made great preparations for it. Jeshua, the high-priest of the Jews, died about this time, in the fifty-third year of his priesthood, and Joiakim, his son, succeeded in that office. Early in the next spring Xerxes set out on his expedition against Greece, with a land army consisting of one million seven hundred thousand foot, and eighty thousand horse, and a fleet proportionable; but being vanquished by Themistocles, the Athenian general, in a memorable battle at Salamis, he escaped in a small fishing-boat, and returned home, leaving three hundred thousand soldiers under the command of one of his generals, to conquer Greece; which army was, not long after, entirely destroyed at Plataea, by Pausanias, the Spartan. You remember Daniel's prophecy, which I told you related to this king*.

Xerxes, on his return home towards Shushan, passing through Babylon, made great devastation there by destroying their temples and images, by which he fulfilled the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah†. The

* Section I. † Jer. li. 44, 47, 52. Isa. xxi. 9.

gold and silver, of which the images were made, he converted to common uses : being at last wholly discouraged by his losses and defeats, he gave his mind entirely up to luxury and dissipation, and grew into great contempt with his people. Artabanes, the captain of his guards, conspired against him, and with the assistance of Mithridates, his chamberlain, got into the royal apartment, and murdered him whilst he slept in his bed.

THE REIGN OF ARTAXERXES LONGIMANUS.

ARTAXERXES, one of the sons of Xerxes, succeeded to the throne ; he is by the Greek historians called LONGIMANUS, on account of the great extent of his dominions, but in some parts of scripture he is called AHASUERUS*.

This king had a queen named Vashti†, who was divorced on account of her refusing to attend him when he was entertaining his nobles at a festive entertainment:—I shall give you the whole history of this transaction when we have time to attend to it ; at present it will be sufficient to say, that Artaxerxes was afterwards married to a young Jewess named ESTHER, of great beauty and piety, who, by her prudent address, obtained several privileges for the Jews, and afterwards prevented a dreadful massacre of those who were dispersed in the different provinces of Persia, to which they were condemned by a royal decree issued against them, at the instigation of a favourite minister named Haman. The privileges which it is supposed queen Esther obtained for the Jews, were, permission for those who still resided in Persia, to return to Jeru-

* Book of Esther.

† Ibid.

salem; to settle the state, reform the church, and to regulate and govern both according to their own laws. EZRA was commissioned to put in execution the decrees which the king granted for this purpose. Ezra was descended from Seraiah the high-priest, who was slain by Nebuchadnezzar when he burnt the Temple at Jerusalem: he was a man of great piety and learning, very conversant in the scriptures, and well acquainted with the law of Moses. Artaxerxes invested Ezra with full authority to do whatever might be for the advantage of the Jewish state, as you will judge from what follows.

THE LETTER WHICH ARTAXERXES GAVE TO
EZRA.

Artaxerxes king of kings unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests, and Levites in my realm, which are minded of their own free-will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God, which is in thine hand; and to carry the silver, and gold which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, and all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the free-will-offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: that thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat-offerings and their drink-offerings, and offer

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them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in
 Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee and
 to thy brethren to do with the rest of thy silver and gold,
 that do after the will of your God. The vessels also
 that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God,
 these deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And
 whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God,
 which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of
 the king's treasure house. And I, even I Artaxerxes the
 king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are
 beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the
 scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of
 you, it be done speedily; unto an hundred talents of silver,
 and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred
 baths of wine, and to an hundred laths of oil, and salt
 without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded
 by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the
 house of the God of heaven: for why should there be
 wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also
 we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Le-
 vites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this
 house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute,
 or custom upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom
 of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and
 judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the
 river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach
 ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do
 the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judg-
 ment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto
 death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to
 imprisonment.

One could scarcely have expected, that a heathen prince would have made such provision for the Temple service, or expressed himself in terms of reverence in respect to God; but we may learn from this circumstance, that idolators were so far convinced of the sovereignty of the LORD JEHOVAH, that they were willing to be at expence to purchase his favour.

As soon as Ezra had received this letter, he made known its contents; and in a short time assembled together one thousand four hundred and ninety-six men, besides women and children, amongst whom were two priests, and about forty Levites. They were very likely to be attacked by enemies in the way, especially as they carried treasures with them, yet Ezra would not ask for guards; instead of that, he and the people had recourse to prayer and fasting, in order to engage the protection of God; for Ezra had declared to the king, that "*the hand of the LORD was upon all those for good that sought him; but his power and his wrath against them that forsook him.*" And it pleased God to reward the faith of him and his companions by the comforts of his HOLY SPIRIT, so that they arrived in safety at Jerusalem. The whole company, which consisted of a mixture of the ten tribes, offered sacrifices; and when they had shewed their commissions, gave assistance to the work.

In the second year of Ezra's government, complaint was made that many of the people, and even some of the priests, had married heathen wives, contrary to the law; this filled him with grief and consternation, for he was apprehensive that they would again return to idolatry. As soon as it was reported that Ezra was in such affliction,

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affliction, there assembled unto him a great congregation, who mixed their tears with his, and it was immediately determined that they should enter into COVENANT *with* God, to put away these wives, which was accordingly done; but without doubt they were properly provided for. About one hundred and thirty persons only had transgressed in this particular; but had the affair not been attended to in time, it would in all probability have proved the destruction of the nation; and it was better that a small number should suffer at first, than that they should have their religion corrupted.

A few years after this, Haman contrived the wicked plot I mentioned to you. The Jews still observe a fast and feast in remembrance of the danger their forefathers were exposed to, and their merciful deliverance from it.

About the twelfth year of the reign of Artaxerxes died Joachim, the high-priest of the Jews, who was succeeded in his office by Eliashab his son.

Before Ezra came to Jerusalem, the scriptures were in a manner lost, the people ignorant of the law, the worship of God neglected, and every thing both in church and state in great disorder. He continued in his government some years, and wrought great reformation; and made it his particular endeavour to produce a correct copy of the HOLY SCRIPTURES; that is to say, all the books of which they then consisted, which he divided into three parts, the Law, the PROPHETS, and the HOLY WRITINGS, viz. the Psalms, &c. for which purpose he collected together all the copies of the sacred books that he could meet with,

384 NEHEMIAH'S GOVERNMENT.

that by comparing them, he might discover the mistakes of different transcribers. Originally every book of the Hebrew Bible was written without any division into chapters and verses; but it is supposed that Ezra divided the law into fifty-four sections, and that he added the last chapter of Deuteronomy, and other parts which appeared necessary for connection and illustration.

In the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra resigned the government of Judea to Nehemiah; but still continued to instruct the people as an expounder of the law, and a preacher of righteousness.

NEHEMIAH was a Jew, whose ancestors had formerly been citizens of Jerusalem; but having obtained a good settlement in the land of their captivity, had staid there in preference to returning with their brethren. He was *cup-bearer* to king Artaxerxes, which was both an honourable and profitable place, and had accumulated a very great fortune; yet he was so far from being insensible to the distresses of his countrymen, that when he was told that they were continually exposed to danger, derision and contempt, on account of their city being defenceless, he felt their sorrows with the tenderest sympathy. He fasted and prayed, imploring the LORD with the most earnest supplication, that he would incline the heart of Artaxerxes to favour his people, and then resolved to petition the king in their behalf. The LORD lent a gracious ear to his humble request; and Artaxerxes not only granted a decree to repair the walls and gates of Jerusalem, but sent Nehemiah thither as governor, to see it put into execution.

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FEAST OF DEDICATION. 385

As soon as his design was known, the Ammonites, Moabites, Samaritans, and other neighbouring nations resolved to oppose it. You have already been informed of the ancient enmity of the Samaritans; but they had an additional motive in common with the other nations, for oppressing them at present; and this was, that they had all seized upon different parts of the Jewish territories during the captivity, which, on the return of the Jews, they had been obliged to restore; for this reason, they did all in their power to prevent their settlement, hoping they should find an opportunity of resuming the prey they had lost. Nehemiah was not discouraged by these malicious enemies, nor by the insinuations of disaffected people and false prophets within the walls, but resolutely persisted; and the people used their utmost exertions, laying their weapons by them, and working and standing guard alternately, by which means they accomplished the work in fifty-two days. Nehemiah and the rulers, during this time, did not even pull off their clothes but to change them for clean ones.

When all was compleated, a great feast was kept at the dedication. After this, Nehemiah relieved the poor from the oppression of the rich, who having lent them money to supply their necessities, had exacted great interest; to pay which they had been obliged to mortgage their lands, and even give up their children to servitude. Shortly after, he returned into Persia, to acquaint the king with his success, obtained a new commission, and, with the assistance of Ezra, set about a farther reformation of the church and state; and as Jerusalem was but thinly inhabited, they pre-

386 GENEALOGY OF THE JEWS.

vailed on the rulers and other great ones to build houses and dwell in the city; and of the common people, every tenth man was taken by lot, and obliged to settle there with their families; by which means, they were enabled to defend the place against their enemies.

Nehemiah next caused the genealogies of the people to be exactly scrutinized, that all might be directed in what parts to take their possessions; and the tribe of Levi to be ascertained, that those who were not of the family of Aaron might be excluded the sanctuary. It is very curious to trace these genealogies, but this we can do at a future time, as it would take our attention too long from the history.

Ezra having completed his copy of the *law of God*, and written it out fairly in the Chaldee character, read it publicly, as you will learn in the following section.

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THE SOLEMN READING OF THE LAW.

AND all the people gathered themselves together as one man, into the street that was before the water-gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

And he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and

on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people) and when he opened it all the people stood up:

And Ezra blessed the LORD the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

And the Levites caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God, mourn not, nor weep: for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions

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portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be you sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be ye grieved.

And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.

And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths, in the feast of the seventh month:

And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths, as it is written.

So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water-gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths : for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so : and there was very great gladness.

Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God : and they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month, the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God, one fourth part of the day, and another
fourth

fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

And they made a covenant with the LORD their God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The scaffold or pulpit from whence Ezra read the LAW to the people, was erected in the largest street of the city; he placed seven of the principal elders on his right hand, and six on his left; and having blessed the LORD, began to read the LAW in *Hebrew*, and whilst he read it in that language, thirteen Levites repeated it period by period to the people in the *Chaldee* tongue; which was usually spoken by the Jews at that time. Nehemiah and Ezra made use of every means in their power to impress the minds of the people with a proper sense of their duty, and excited them to make a covenant with the LORD, that they would keep his Sabbaths, and observe his statutes; and that they might no more plead ignorance of the law in excuse for their sins, the Israelites from this time had the scriptures frequently read and explained to them by the most learned amongst the Levites and other scribes, which at first it is likely they did in the same manner as Ezra; but the inconvenience of standing in the open street in all weathers, suggested the thought of building houses or tabernacles; and this seems to have been the original of synagogues, which soon multiplied like our parish-churches; for every town where there were ten persons of full age and in easy circumstances of life, so as to have leisure to attend the public service, was at li-

berty to erect one, and in each of these synagogues was a copy of the law. The service performed in them consisted of Prayers, reading the Scriptures, and Preaching or expounding them. This was done two days in the week, besides on the sabbath and the festivals. The law being divided, as I told you, into so many sections as there are weeks in the year, they read half a lesson on Monday morning, and the other half on Thursday morning, and this same lesson they read on the sabbath both morning and afternoon; and when reading of the prophets was added to reading the law, the same order was observed in respect to them.

The hours of prayer amongst the Jews, whether in their synagogues or private houses, were at the times of offering the morning and evening sacrifices in the Temple; for they supposed that the sacrifices and incense were designed to render God propitious to them, and to make their prayers acceptable. The priests and Levites only officiated in the Temple, but persons of any tribe were appointed for the service of the synagogue by some of the elders of the town, who were called rulers of the synagogue.

Great advantages arose from the practice of building synagogues, and reading and explaining the scriptures, for the Jews never were guilty of idolatry any more; but when they were afterwards scattered into various nations, they erected places for public worship wherever the rulers of the country would permit them. It was also by means of these synagogues that the heathens, where the Jews were dispersed, came to know the true God, and some general principles of virtue and piety.

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NEHEMIAH'S PROSPERITY. 393

Nehemiah, after he had been governor of Judea twelve years, returned to the Persian court: he staid about five years in Persia, and then was sent by the king with a fresh commission: during his absence many things had gone wrong, but he exerted his usual zeal to reform all irregularities. About four years after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem, Artaxerxes died in the forty-first year of his reign: during his government Nehemiah acted with great justice, and supported his office with a very expensive magnificence out of his own private purse. He had, as I said before, amassed great wealth, and thought he could not expend it better than in the service of God and his country, and in the promotion of RELIGION, and God prospered him accordingly. You shall, when we have leisure, read Nehemiah's own account of his government, which is in the bible, and I am sure you will be charmed with his exalted piety, his love for his country, extensive benevolence, judicious liberality, and manly courage; for they shew his character in a most amiable light, and render him worthy of the imitation of those who are blessed with power and affluence.

Ezra's example is well worthy of the consideration of those, whose business it is to instruct others in the duties of RELIGION; for he was indefatigable in the study of the scriptures, and took infinite pains to render them intelligible and useful.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS DURING THE REIGNS OF XERXES THE SECOND, SOGDIANUS, AND DARIUS NOTHUS.

ARTAXERXES was succeeded by his son Xerxes the second who was killed by his brother Sogdianus.

SOGDIANUS was put to death in a cruel manner by his brother Ochus.

OCHUS obtained the kingdom, and changed his name to Darius, and is the same whom historians call DARIUS NOTHUS.

Nehemiah, during these revolutions, continued still in the government of Judea. ELIASHIB, the high-priest, died in the 11th year of the reign of Darius Nothus, and was succeeded by JEHOIADA.

This king permitted a man named Sanballat, to erect a Temple on mount Gerizim, like that at Jerusalem, and make his son-in-law Manasses, high-priest of it. Manasses was one of those Jews who married heathen wives, and resolving not to give up his, had fled from Jerusalem to escape punishment: from this time Samaria became the common refuge and asylum of those Jews who were found guilty of breaking the sabbaths, &c. so that in time the greatest part of its inhabitants were apostate Jews. Those whom Esar-haddon had planted there, worshipped other gods besides the LORD; but these did not do so, for a book of the law was carried to Samaria, and publicly read; daily service was also performed there, the same as at Jerusalem: notwithstanding this, the Jews hated the Samaritans above all the people upon earth, and avoided all kind of converse and communication with them—the original cause of this enmity you are already acquainted with.

How long Nehemiah lived at Jerusalem after this, is uncertain, but it is supposed he continued in the government to the time of his death; after him there seems to have been no governor of Judea, but this country

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country being added to Syria, became wholly subjected to the governor of that province, and under him the high-priest had the trust of regulating all affairs there. DARIUS NOTHUS met with great disturbances, and after he had reigned nineteen years died.

I have told you, my dear, that the LORD made *two* COVENANTS with ABRAHAM, one relating to TEMPORAL PROSPERITY *in the land of Canaan*, the other to a *general blessing to be conveyed through him to ALL MANKIND*. You have seen the completion of the first, in the course of the history of the Israelites from Abraham to king David; and also know that the LORD made a covenant with David, and by what means his descendants forfeited the Divine favour; and that the *Israelites*, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the *tribe of Judah*, for the sake of David, were miraculously preserved from utter destruction, although they had so frequently provoked the LORD by disobedience. Notwithstanding the general defection of God's chosen people, there were always some among them who adhered to the divine law; but these were unavoidably involved in the public calamities which were inflicted on the disobedient; to comfort them therefore, and warn the wicked to return to the LORD, a succession of prophets were sent, as I have before observed, who foretold the various revolutions that would happen in the Jewish state, and the heathen nations, with whom the Israelites were, at different periods, connected. You have read how exactly the predictions respecting the captivity of Israel and Judah were accomplished, and by what wonderful means their restoration to the land of their inheritance was

effected; where they were once more governed by their own laws, and allowed to worship God in his holy Temple; but the children of Israel were not yet in so honourable a condition as formerly, being still under subjection to the heathens, and dispersed in different countries. The LORD had therefore graciously provided a continual source of consolation for them, by revealing to the prophets who committed these revelations to writing, that a farther deliverance would be wrought for the remnant of his faithful people, by the coming of the Messiah. But we will pass over these prophecies at present, that we may read them with the New Testament, as the history of the events they treat of, will be the best comment on them.

The sacred books of the Old Testament, do not give us any farther history of the Jews than what you have read; but this deficiency is supplied by very authentic authors. A learned Dean * in particular of our own nation, has, from the works of heathen and Jewish writers, composed a complete connection between the Old and New Testaments: this work is too intricate for your comprehension, as he expatiates largely on the histories of other nations; but I will select for your information such parts as most immediately relate to the history of God's chosen people, from this period to the coming of the Messiah, when we shall resume the history in the words of inspired writers.

* Dean Prideaux. I have mentioned this author in particular, because most others which I have met with on this subject, have either copied from him like myself, or borrowed from the same sources of information as he did: however, it is but justice to acknowledge, that I frequently make use of the words of Mr. Stackhouse and Dr. Watts.

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PERSIA, &c.

ARTAXERXES-MEMNON, one of the sons of Darius-Nothus, succeeded him in the throne. The reign of this king is long, and full of interesting events, but we must confine ourselves to the Jewish history.

In the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, died Jehoida the high-priest, who was succeeded by his son Jehonnan, called also Jonathan, who held it thirty-two years. Jeshua his brother, by means of the governor of Syria, obtained a grant of the priesthood for himself, and went to take possession; which occasioned a great contention, and Jehonnan killed Jeshua in the inner court of the Temple. The governor of Syria was exceedingly enraged at this action, and coming up to Jerusalem, obliged the priests to pay out of the public treasury, a very considerable tax; but they were at his death relieved from it. Jaddua the son of Jehonnan, succeeded his father as high-priest of the Jews.

Towards the latter end of the reign of Artaxerxes, great disturbances arose in the Persian empire, occasioned by the contentions of his sons about the succession,

cession, for he had a numerous family. At length the poor old king, who was upwards of ninety-four years of age, died of grief.

ARTAXERXES OCHUS, one of his sons, succeeded to the throne. This monarch was the cruelest and worst of all the Persian kings.

The Sidonians and other Phœnicians, revolted and entered into a confederacy with the king of Egypt, but Artaxerxes subdued them all. The Sidonians were betrayed into his hands by their own king, and finding there was no way to escape either by sea or land, they retired to their houses, and setting fire to them over their heads, were all consumed to the number of forty thousand men, besides women and children. Artaxerxes having no farther need of the king of Sidon, caused him to be put to death: there were vast riches in Sidon at the time of this calamity, which being all melted down by the flames, Artaxerxes sold the ashes for a considerable sum of money.

The Jews seem to have engaged with the Phœnicians against Artaxerxes; for after the destruction of Sidon he marched into Judea, besieged and took Jericho, and making many of the Jews captive, led them into Egypt and other parts.

Artaxerxes at length subdued all the revolted provinces, and then gave himself up to luxury and dissipation, and left the management of public affairs to ministers: after he had reigned twenty-one years, he was poisoned by Bagoas his favourite.

Upon the death of ARTAXERXES OCHUS, ARSES the son of that monarch was made king by Bagoas, who put all the kings sons to death. The name of king,

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king, was all that remained to Arses, for the power and authority Bagoas reserved to himself.

About this time PHILIP of Macedon was made commander in chief of all the Grecian cities and states, for carrying on a war against the Persians: but before he could set out on the expedition, he was slain at home by a young nobleman, whose injuries he had neglected to redress, and was succeeded by his son ALEXANDER, who was then about twenty-one years old.

ARSES king of Persia was slain by the treachery of Bagoas, who then placed on the throne DARIUS the Third, distinguished in history by the name of DARIUS CODOMANUS.

Bagoas not finding him such an one as would answer his purpose, resolved to poison him; but Darius being apprized of it, obliged him to drink the deadly potion himself, and became settled in the kingdom without any farther difficulty.

DARIUS CODOMANUS is said to have been the handsomest man in the Persian empire, very valiant, and of a mild and generous disposition; he was scarcely seated on the throne, before ALEXANDER, king of Macedon, prepared to drive him from it.

There is one part of the prophecies of Daniel respecting the conquest of Persia by the Greeks, which gives one such a lively image of the contest between the two kingdoms, that it illustrates this part of our history, and you shall read it now.

400 DANIEL'S PROPHECY.

THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL CONCERNING THE
FALL OF THE PERSIAN MONARCHY.

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar, a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.

And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass when I saw that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam: and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

Then I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward, so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand, but he did according to his will, and became great.

And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

And

DANIEL'S PROPHECY. 401

And it came to pass when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.

So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid; and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.

Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

The ram which thou sawest having two horns, are the kings of Media and Persia.

And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes, is the first king.

Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

You find, my dear, by the interpretation of the angel, that the ram with two horns, signified the kingdom of Media and Persia. You already know how this mighty empire extended itself, and brought all others in subjection to it. You may also understand, that by the he-goat is meant, the GRECIAN Power in general, which, led on by ALEXANDER the GREAT, (described as a notable horn) advanced with rapid speed,
and

402 ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

and soon (as you will read) cast down the PERSIAN power to the ground.

Alexander, shortly after his father's death, was declared general of the Greeks, and marched into Persia with an army, consisting of no more than thirty thousand foot, and four thousand horse, furnished only with a sum sufficient to subsist his army for thirty days; he encountered the Persian army at the river Granicus, and gained a great victory over them, though they were five times his number, and got possession of several provinces, and a great deal of treasure. After this, he defeated Darius with an army consisting of six hundred thousand men; above one hundred thousand Persians were left dead in the field, a great number trampled to death by their own party as they were endeavouring to escape through a narrow pass.—In this battle, Darius was in great danger of losing his life, and his wife, children, and family, were taken captives.

After ALEXANDER had defeated Darius, he marched along the sea-coast towards Phœnicia, every place he came to yielded, but none more readily than Sidon. You may remember, my dear, that this city was miserably destroyed in the reign of DARIUS OCHUS; but it happened that, some of its inhabitants were absent on merchandize and other occasions; these returned and rebuilt the city, but having an inveterate hatred to the Persians, gladly submitted to Alexander.

The whole of Syria and Phœnicia was now subdued by the Macedonians, excepting the city of Tyre, which being excellently situated for commerce, standing on an island, and having noble ports, was not so

much

much a city belonging to any particular nation, as the common city of all nations, to which they sent their different commodities, and from whence they received the product of other lands. Before we proceed in the history, you shall read the predictions delivered many years before concerning it.

THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH AND EZEKIEL
CONCERNING TYRE.

The burden of Tyre, (spoken by Isaiab the prophet, saying,) Howl ye ships of Tarshish: for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in. From the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.*

Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle, thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.

And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue: and she is a mart of nations.

As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.

Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.

Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth?

The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength.

He

* By Chittim is meant Greece.

404 EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY.

He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant-city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.

And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.

*The word of the LORD came to Ezekiel, saying,
Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus;
And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry
of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many
isles, Thus saith the LORD GOD, O Tyrus, thou hast said,
I am of perfect beauty.*

*Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders
have perfected thy beauty.*

*They have made all thy ship-boards of fir-trees of Senir:
they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for
thee.*

*Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars: the
company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory,
brought out of the isles of Chittim.*

*Fine linen with brodered work from Egypt was that
which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple
from the isles of Elisbah was that which covered thee.*

*The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mari-
ners: thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were
thy pilots.*

*The ancients of Gebal, and the wise men thereof were
in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their
mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.*

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They of Persia, and of Lud, and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war : they banged the shield and helmet in thee, they set forth thy comeliness.

The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers ; they banged their shields upon thy walls round about : they have made thy beauty perfect.

Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches : with silver, iron, tin, and lead they traded in thy fairs.

Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants : they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses, and horsemen, and mules.

The men of Dedan were thy merchants ; many isles were the merchandize of thine hand : they brought thee for a present horns of ivory, and ebony.

Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making : they occupied thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate.

Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants : they traded in thy market wheat of Minith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches ; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool.

Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs : bright iron, cassia and calamus were in thy market.

Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.

Arabia

406 EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY.

Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they thy merchants.

The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants; they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold.

Haran, and Canneh and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad were thy merchants.

These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and brodered work, and in chests of rich apparel bound with cords, and made of cedar among thy merchandize.

The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market; and thou wast replenished and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

Thy riches and thy fairs, thy merchandize, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers and the occupiers of thy merchandize, and all thy men of war that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.

The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots.

And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land;

And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes.

And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart, and bitter wailing.

And

And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?

When the wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledest many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandize.

In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall.

All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance.

The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shall be any more.

Son of man, say unto the PRINCE OF TYRUS, Thus saith the LORD GOD, because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of GOD in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not GOD though thou set thine heart as the heart of GOD:

By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD, Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of GOD;

Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.

They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God : every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond : the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold : the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned : therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God : and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness : I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquities of thy traffick : therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee : thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

These prophecies were partly fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar in the destruction of *Old Tyre*, but the new city rose to still greater power and grandeur than the other, and was in a very flourishing condition in the time of Alexander. The remembrance of the former misfortunes which had befallen Tyre, was obliterated by a series of prosperity, and the inhabitants once more regarded her as the *queen of cities* : pride, luxury, avarice, licentiousness, and impiety, again ruled their

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actions; they again confided in their own strength and power, forgetful of the ALMIGHTY *band*, which had before humbled them in the dust. That this *would* be the case was known to GOD, who had foretold by his holy prophets, that Tyre would provoke divine justice to inflict another chastisement upon it in about four hundred years from the first, and that this destruction should come from Chittim, which is Macedonia. We shall now see how this prophecy was fulfilled by Alexander.

The Tyrians, willing to secure the friendship of this mighty monarch, sent ambassadors to him with provisions for his army; but he insisted on their submitting to him as their master, on which they denied him admittance into their city: he then resolved to besiege it, and at length, with great skill and labour, accomplished the conquest of *old* Tyre, and afterwards he burnt *new* Tyre to the ground, and destroyed or enslaved all its inhabitants; eight thousand he slew, two thousand of those whom he took prisoners he caused to be crucified; the rest, to the number of thirty thousand, were sold for slaves. Some had, before the siege, sent their wives and children to Carthage for safety, and some were preserved by the Sidonians, who conveyed them away privately in ships. These were very heavy judgments, but from the prophetic writings we learn that they were deservedly inflicted.

GREAT-BRITAIN, the country which we inhabit, resembles Tyre in many particulars, being like that, an Island, guarded by the ocean; our ships claim the sovereignty of the seas. Riches flow in to us from every quarter of the globe, and the produce of our land is

410 ALEXANDER GOES TO JERUSALEM.

sought by distant nations. If RIGHTEOUSNESS is within our walls, the united force of many kingdoms cannot prevail against us; but if we suffer our hearts to be lifted up, if we forsake the LORD our God, if we profane his sabbaths, and abuse his blessings, by making them subservient to luxury and licentiousness, *the LORD of hosts will stain our glory, and bring us into contempt!* Let me then, my dear child, impress upon your uncorrupted mind, this important maxim, "RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION, BUT SIN IS THE DESTRUCTION OF ANY PEOPLE." Do not therefore be prevailed on by any temptations, to contribute to the downfall of your COUNTRY by the practice of wickedness: learn the precepts of VIRTUE and RELIGION in your YOUTH, and regulate your future conduct by them; and neglect not to pray to the LORD that he will yet spare *our TYRE*, and grant us a farther time for repentance!

ALEXANDER LEADS HIS ARMY AGAINST JERUSALEM.

After Alexander had subdued Tyre, he marched to Jerusalem; the cause of his doing so was this:

The Tyrians being chiefly given to merchandizing, were mostly supplied with provisions by their neighbours; and Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, being the countries from whence they were principally furnished, Alexander, during the siege of Tyre, was obliged to apply to the same quarter, and therefore sent to require the inhabitants of those places to submit to him. The Jews pleaded their oath of allegiance to Darius, which

forbad

forbad their acknowledging a new master during his life; this exceedingly enraged the proud conqueror, therefore he resolved to punish Jerusalem. In this distress Jaddua the high-priest, who had then the immediate government of the people under the Persians, being in great perplexity, resolved to *seek the LORD, and trust to his ALMIGHTY PROTECTION*. Sacrifices and prayers were therefore devoutly offered, and the LORD had compassion on his people; and directed Jaddua in the visions of the night to go out and meet the conqueror in his sacred robes, with all the priests in their proper habits, and the people in white garments; which they did, and advancing to a place called Sapha, (an eminence without Jerusalem) there waited the coming of Alexander, and on his approach met him in this solemn manner; he was struck with profound awe at the spectacle, and hastening forward, bowed down to Jaddua with a religious veneration, to the great surprise of those who attended him.

While all stood amazed, Parmenio, one of Alexander's generals, asked him how it came to pass, that he, whom all adored, should pay such adoration to the Jewish high-priest; to which he answered, that he did not pay that adoration to him, but to the God whose priest he was. For that when he was in Macedonia, and was deliberating how he should carry on the war against Persia, and was in much doubt about the undertaking, he saw in a dream this very man, who encouraged him to lay aside all fear and diffidence, and pass boldly into Asia; promising him that God would be his guide, and give him the empire of the Persians; therefore he was now

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confident,

412 ALEXANDER'S SACRIFICES.

confident, he should succeed according to his desire; then turning to Jaddua, he kindly embraced him, and entered Jerusalem in a friendly manner, where he offered sacrifices to God in the Temple; and Jaddua having shewn him the prophecies of Daniel, which predicted the overthrow of the Persian empire by a Grecian king, he went from thence with greater assurance of success, not doubting but he was the person meant by those prophecies*.

The Samaritans, encouraged by Alexander's treatment of the Jews, met him also with great pomp, and prayed that he would honour their city and temple with his presence; he answered them kindly, but was not then at leisure, being on a hasty march into Egypt, and soon brought that country into subjection to him; here he built a city, and called it after his own name, ALEXANDRIA, and afterwards peopled it with colonies drawn from other places; among whom were many Jews: to these he gave great privileges, and allowed them the free use of their religion.

When Alexander had settled all his affairs in Egypt, he hastened towards the east to find out Darius; in his return towards Palestine, he learnt that Andronicus, a great favourite of his, whom he had made governor of Syria and Palestine, had been murdered by the Samaritans; who, rising in a tumult, had set fire to the house in which he was, and burnt him to death, on account, as is supposed, of their not having the same privileges granted to them as their enemies the Jews had. Alexander being exceedingly exasperated against the Samaritans, caused all who had any part in the murder to be

* See Dan. viii.

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SAMARITANS PUNISHED. 413

put to death, and drove all the rest out of the city, placing Macedonians in their stead, and giving the remainder of their territories to the Jews. Those who survived the calamity retired to Shechem, under mount Gerizim, and from that time this place became the *metropolis* of the SAMARITAN SECT. Those Samaritans who were in his army, Alexander sent to Egypt, to prevent disturbances, and then pursued his course in quest of other conquests.

I cannot entertain you at present with a particular detail of all Alexander's victories; I have already related those, by which he fulfilled some remarkable prophecies; I shall therefore only add, that in a short space of time he got possession of the whole Persian empire.

Darius defended his kingdom to the utmost of his power, but was at last treacherously seized by two of his generals, and bound with chains of gold, and afterwards mortally wounded by them, and left in a covered chariot, where he expired before the arrival of Alexander; who lamented his unhappy fate, and bestowed an honourable funeral upon him, and treated his family with the utmost kindness. Thus died DARIUS CODOMANUS, and with him ended the Persian empire, after having existed two hundred and nineteen years, from the beginning of the reign of Cyrus.

When you read the history of the reign of the Persians*, my dear, you will learn, that at the time they conquered Babylon, they were a sober, laborious, and modest people; but after they had concluded their conquests, they degenerated from their natural character, and grew fond of magnificence, ease and pleasure;

* Rollin's Ancient History.

414 DEATH OF DARIUS.

till at length they became like the Babylonians, and were regarded as the most luxurious people in the world; therefore, we cannot wonder that the Grecians were suffered to subdue them.

Darius was himself an amiable character, and we know not what good effects might be produced in his mind by misfortunes. The captivity of his family, proved the means of their preservation from death; and his sorrows might teach him to acknowledge the power of the SUPREME BEING, and to submit to his will. You will read in the *New Testament*, that “*If those who knew not the law, did by nature the things contained in the law, they were a law unto themselves;*” from whence we may conclude, I think, that those who have not enjoyed the advantages of Divine revelation, and are unavoidably ignorant of the scriptures, will be finally judged according as they have obeyed or disobeyed the dictates of their own consciences, for there is a natural sense of right and wrong planted in every breast. Darius seems to have acted with uprightness and piety to the best of his knowledge, as many heathens did, and therefore we may hope they were partakers of divine mercy.

THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

When Alexander had secured to himself the Persian empire, he resolved on the conquest of other nations; and after a variety of successes, which you will read in the Grecian history, took up his residence in Babylon; here he employed his thoughts on embellishing the city, and meditated future enterprizes; but met with obstacles at first, and died before the completion of his

(Scheme)

ALEXANDER'S EXCESSES. 415

schemes; a supreme cause, unknown to men, overruled his actions; the LORD of hosts had sworn above three hundred years before, “ *I * will cut off from BABYLON the name and remnant. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction; it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.*”

Alexander intended to repair the Temple of Belus, but GOD had ordained that it should not be rebuilt. The Jews who were amongst his army, refused to take their turn in clearing away the rubbish, though they were repeatedly punished; but at length the king, admiring their constancy, discharged them and sent them home.

Whilst Alexander continued in Babylon he gave himself up to great excesses, “ he was for ever solemnizing new festivals, and perpetually at new banquets. After having spent a whole night in drinking, a second was proposed to him. He went accordingly, and there were twenty guests at table. He drank to the health of every person in company, and then pledged them severally. After this, calling for the cup of Hercules which held six bottles, he poured it all down, drinking to one of the company, who pledged him again in the same furious bumper. Alexander had no sooner swallowed his, than he fell on the floor, “ **CONQUERED BY INTEMPERANCE;**” in this condition he was seized with a fever, which very soon put an end to his life at the age of thirty-two years and eight months. It fell out as the prophet had foretold, for Alexander

* Isa. xiv. 22, 23.—xiii. 20.

416 APOCRYPHAL BOOKS.

could not name his successor, as he knew there would be great disputes on this subject; and that his children were too young to assert their claim, and he had no friend he could depend on as a guardian.

What you have lately read, my dear, concerning the empire of the Persians, and the conquests of *Alexander the Great*, is related in the works of *heathen* and Jewish writers. What follows is chiefly taken from the antiquities of Josephus, a learned Jew.

Besides the Canonical Books in the Old Testament, we have in our larger Bibles, additional ones, called Apocryphal Books: (Apocryphal means something dubious, or written by an uncertain author;) these, though not admitted as *sacred*, are much esteemed; some on account of the excellent moral precepts they contain, and others for the credible relations they give of the history of the Jews; amongst the latter are the two Books of the Maccabees; these are wrote in a style so like the *holy writings*, that you will have very great pleasure in reading them; but as the chapters are long, and the historical events rather complicated, you must be contented at present with a few occasional extracts, and an abridgement of our learned Dean's relation of the substance of them; who has, by the assistance of the authors above-mentioned, instructed us how to arrange and connect them properly.

THE HISTORY OF ALEXANDER'S SUCCESSORS.

Alexander, in his life-time, gave to his principal commanders the government of different provinces; this filled them with aspiring views, and made them,

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when their great leader was taken from them, de-
 firous of sovereign power.

You have formerly read what Daniel prophesied
 concerning Alexander's kingdom, *That it should be rent
 asunder after his decease, and that it should not be trans-
 mitted in the usual way to his posterity.*

As soon as his death was known, there was a gene-
 ral lamentation, for he was greatly beloved and re-
 verenced: his army in particular, abandoned them-
 selves to immoderate grief; the state in which they were
 left, struck them with consternation, for they had
 many evils to dread in consequence of his loss. The
 only way to prevent them, was by a speedy nomination
 of a new sovereign; but no effort of *human wisdom*
 could establish a *sole successor* to that prince, because the
 purposes for which Alexander was raised to such a
 pitch of power, were answered in the chastisement of the
 wicked nations he subdued; and the LORD knew that
 he would grow proud and arrogant, luxurious and im-
 pious, and therefore had ordained that his honour
 should not descend to his posterity.

The king had an infant son to whom he had given
 the name of Hercules, he had also a brother named
 Aridaüs, but he was young, and of a weak under-
 standing. A variety of troubles and disputes arose
 amongst Alexander's chiefs; at length it was unani-
 mously resolved that Aridaüs should be made king, or
 rather that he should be invested with the shew of
 royalty. Perdikkas, one of the chiefs to whom Alexan-
 der had given his ring in his last moments, had the
 person of the prince committed to his care, and re-
 mained at Babylon as regent of the kingdom: the

name of Aridæus was changed to Philip, and sometime afterward the son of Roxana (Alexander's queen) who was born after his father's death, was joined in the sovereignty with Philip: in the mean time the rest of the chiefs repaired to their several governments, and as soon as they were settled in their provinces, began to form confederacies and make war on one another, till in process of time all were destroyed except *Cassander*, *Lysimachus*, *Ptolemy*, and *Seleucus*, and they divided the whole empire among them.

In this division **PTOLEMY**, whom the Greeks call **SOTER**, having taken possession of Egypt, resolved to make himself master also of Cœlo-Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine. **COELO-SYRIA** was a part of Syria; **PALESTINE** that country which was formerly the inheritance of the children of Israel; and **PHOENICIA**, the maritime parts of both. Ptolemy succeeded in his enterprizes against these provinces, but the Jews for some time, refused to yield to him, on account of the oath they had taken to the governor whom Ptolemy deposed; upon which he marched his forces into Judea, and having got possession of most of the country, laid siege to Jerusalem. This city was strong enough both by nature and art, to have made a long resistance; but Ptolemy came upon them on the Sabbath-day, when he knew they would not defend themselves, and took the place by storm. At first he treated the inhabitants with great rigour; but afterwards, considering how faithful they had been to their former governor, he employed them in his army and garrison, and granted them great privileges, upon which the whole nation of the Jews became subject to the king of Egypt.

THE DEATH OF JADDUA. 419

HISTORY OF THE JEWS UNDER THE KINGS OF EGYPT.

Three years after the death of Alexander the Great, died Jaddua the high-priest of the Jews, who was succeeded by his son Onias. Onias died in the fifth year of the reign of Ptolemy Soter king of Egypt, and his son Simon, who, on account of the sanctity of his life, was called *Simon the just*, succeeded him; he continued in his office nine years, during which time he did many beneficial acts, both for church and state, but particularly in collecting together the books of the Old Testament. Those of Ezra, Esther, and the prophet Malachi are supposed to have been added by him, to those before published by Ezra. Simon was the last of the Great Synagogue, which consisted of a succession of men who attended to the preservation of the accuracy of the scriptures, that they might not be corrupted; and it is by means of such persons as Simon, that we have had them transmitted to us.

Simon was succeeded by his brother ELEAZAR, for his son Onias was a minor when his father died. After the death of Simon, the Jews did not rigorously confine themselves to the doctrine of scripture, but TRADITION began to prevail; by which is meant, the sayings of the ancients, delivered down by word of mouth. Antigonus Socho, an eminent scribe in the law of God, president of the sanhedrim, or senate of the elders at Jerusalem, was the first teacher of this secondary law of tradition. Afterwards (as you will find in the New Testament) all the teachers or doctors of the Jewish law, were sometimes called scribes, and sometimes lawyers, or those who sat in Moses' seat.

PTOLEMY SOTER established a museum. This was a large edifice in the city of Alexandria, designed for the habitation of such learned men as made it their study to improve philosophy and all useful knowledge. This college produced a number of persons eminent for literature, and occasioned Alexandria to be regarded for many ages together, in all parts of the world, as the school of learning.

In this museum was a library, said to have consisted of four hundred thousand volumes; and there was another in a temple, which increased in time to three hundred thousand, amounting in the whole to seven hundred thousand volumes. The greatest part of this famous library was accidentally burnt by one of the Roman emperors, and the rest, which had received a considerable addition, was at length, many years afterwards, destroyed by the Saracens.

PTOLEMY SOTER was succeeded in the throne by his son Ptolemy Philadelphus: this prince pursued his father's plan in respect to the museum, and hearing that the Jews had a famous book (what we now call the Old Testament) which well deserved a place in the collection, he sent to Eleazar the high-priest, to desire an authentic copy of it; and because it was wrote in a language he did not understand, requested that he would send a competent number of learned men, well versed both in Greek and Hebrew to translate it for him. This he complied with; and it is said, that seventy or seventy-two translators were employed to turn it into Greek; but whether so great a number were actually engaged in this work or not, is a question of dispute with the learned; however,

their version of the law of Moses, with the translation of the prophets, which was afterwards made and added, is called from this circumstance, the *translation of the seventy*. I have told you in what manner the law was explained in Chaldee, by Ezra, after the return of the Jews from Babylon: and when by their residence at Alexandria, the Greek was become most familiar to them, the scriptures were explained in that language; and from thence those Jews were called Hellenists, or Greekizing Jews, because they used the Greek language in their synagogues.

After the death of Ptolemy Philadelphus, EVERGETUS came to the crown of Egypt, and ONIUS succeeded his uncle Eleazar as high-priest.

ONIUS was the son of Simon the just, but in many respects the very reverse of his father: at the best he was a very weak and inconsiderate man.

When Ptolemy Evergetes died, his son PHILOPATER succeeded to the throne. Antiochus the Great, king of Syria (who descended from Seleucus) dispossessed the Egyptian king of several of his provinces, amongst which was Judea; but Philopater afterwards defeated the army of Antiochus, and recovered Cœlo-Syria and Palestine.

PTOLEMY visited the cities which he had regained by this victory, amongst which was Jerusalem. Here he took a view of the Temple, and presented costly gifts, and offered sacrifices to the God of *Israel*; but not being content with an outward view, he was desirous of entering into the SANCTUARY, nay, even into the MOST HOLY PLACE, which none but the priest (and that only on the day of expiation) was allowed to enter.

ter. This occasioned great confusion; the priests and Levites assembled to prevent the king's entrance, but all to no purpose; Philopater resolved to gratify his curiosity, and accordingly pressed on to the inner-court; but as he was passing farther to go into the Temple, he was seized with a sudden terror and consternation of mind, and carried out half dead. In a short time he departed from the place, highly incensed with the whole nation of the Jews, and uttering many bitter threatenings against them.

SIMON (the second of that name) the son of Onias, was high-priest at this time; for his father dying towards the end of the former year, he succeeded him in the office. Onias had been extremely negligent during his administration, which the Samaritans taking advantage of, had been very vexatious to the Jews, by plundering and ravaging their country, carrying many of the inhabitants into captivity, and selling them for slaves.

No sooner was Ptolemy arrived at Alexandria but he published a decree, excluding every one who did not sacrifice to his god from having any access to him; degrading the Jews from the rights and privileges they had in the city, and ordering them all to be marked with the impression of an ivy-leaf with a red-hot iron, and as many as refused, to be put to death.

Nor did his rage end here, for he sent out orders, requiring his officers to bring all the Jews who lived any where in Egypt, in chains to Alexandria; and having shut them up in a large place without the city called the Hippodrome, where the people used to assemble to see horse-races and other shows, he proposed

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the next day to make a spectacle of them, by having them destroyed by elephants; and to make these beasts more furious, they were intoxicated with wine mingled with frankincense; but the king the night before, having sat up late at a feast, overslept himself, which obliged the shew to be put off. He did so the next day; all this while the poor Jews continued shut up in the Hippodrome, where they ceased not with the most earnest supplications to implore the mercy of God, who graciously heard their prayer, and afforded them a wonderful deliverance. For on the third day, when the king was present, and the elephants let loose, instead of falling upon the Jews, they turned all their rage upon those who came to see the shew, and killed numbers of them. This wonderful event so terrified the king, that he ordered all the Jews to be set at liberty, restored them to their former privileges, and among other favours, indulged them with the power of putting those to death who had apostatized from their religion; but of the many thousands of the Jewish race, who then dwelt at Alexandria, only three hundred had forsaken their God to gain the favour of the king.

Upon the death of Ptolemy Philopater, his son **PTOLEMY EPIPHANES** (a child of five years old) succeeded to the throne; but **ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT**, king of Syria, taking advantage of the young king's inability to oppose him, marched into Cœlo-Syria and Palestine, and in a very short time made himself master of them, and was chearfully received by the Jews; in return for which, he granted them liberty to live according to their own **LAWS** and **RELIGION**.

Shortly

424 ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT.

Shortly after this, Antiochus made peace with Ptolemy, and gave him his daughter Cleopatra to wife; and with her, as a dower, Cælo-Syria and Palestine, upon condition of dividing the revenues of those provinces with him.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS UNDER ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT, AND SELEUCUS, KINGS OF SYRIA.

ANTIOCHUS was a prince of great humanity, clemency, and beneficence, and very just in the administration of his government; and till the fiftieth year of his life, managed all his affairs with valour, prudence, and application, which deservedly gained him the title of *the great*: but afterwards he declined in wisdom and conduct, till at length he was vanquished by the Romans, and driven out of the best part of his dominions, and forced to submit to very disgraceful terms of peace, and at last died in an inglorious manner: for having robbed an idol temple, he was slain by the people of the country as he was carrying off the spoil. There is amongst the prophecies of Daniel * a very remarkable prediction respecting Antiochus the Great, but this cannot be explained to you without a circumstantial history of his reign, which is too copious for our examination at present.

After the death of *Antiochus the Great*, his son Seleucus Philopater, succeeded him in the kingdom of Syria, to which he annexed Cælo-Syria, Palestine, and other adjacent provinces: it is not certain at what

* Dan. xi. 12 to 14 inclusive. See the Application in Rollin's Ancient History. Prideaux's Connection,

HELIODORUS'S CRUELTY. 425

time, or by what means, he gained possession of them. At first he favoured the Jews, and supplied them with all things necessary for the service of the Temple at his own expence; but being informed by one Simon, a Benjamite, who was governor of the Temple, and had disagreed with the high-priest, that there were great riches in the Temple, he sent his treasurer, Heliodorus, to seize and bring them to Antioch; upon which Heliodorus took his journey, and when he arrived at Jerusalem, met with a most gracious reception from the high-priest; but as soon as he informed him that he came in the king's name to demand the money which they had in the treasury, the high-priest remonstrated with him on the cruelty and injustice of seizing what was deposited in trust for the relief of widows and orphans; but this wicked man was deaf to every plea of humanity and justice, and insisted on obeying the king's command. “ Wherefore, * (as the Book of Maccabees informs us) there was no small agony in the city. But the priests, prostrating themselves before the altar in their priests vestments, called unto heaven upon him that made a law concerning things given to be kept, that they should safely be preserved for such as had committed them to be kept. Then whoso had looked the high-priest in the face, it would have wounded his heart: for his countenance, and the changing of his colour, declared the inward agony of his mind: For the man was so compassed with fear, and horror of the body, that it was manifest to them that looked upon him, what sorrow he had now in his heart. Others ran flocking out of their houses to the

* 2 Macc. iii. 14—23.

426 HELIODORUS'S TERROR.

general supplication, because the place was like to come into contempt. And the women, girt with sackcloth abounded in the streets, and the virgins that were kept in, ran, some to the gates, and some to the walls, and others looked out of the windows: all holding their hands towards heaven, made supplication. Then it would have pitied a man to see the falling down of the multitude of all sorts, and the fear of the high-priest, being in such an agony. They then called upon the ALMIGHTY LORD, to keep the things committed of trust, safe and sure, for those that had committed them."

Notwithstanding this, Heliodorus resolved to seize the money by violence; on which we are informed, he had a very extraordinary vision: this terrified him to such a degree "that * he was cast down and lay speechless, without any hope of life. But they praised the LORD that had miraculously honoured his own place: for the Temple, which a little before was full of fear and trouble, when the ALMIGHTY LORD appeared, was filled with joy and gladness. Then straightway certain of Heliodorus' friends prayed Onias, that he would call upon the MOST HIGH, to grant him his life, who lay ready to give up the ghost. So the high-priest suspecting lest the king should misconceive that some treachery had been done to Heliodorus by the Jews, offered a sacrifice for the health of the man. So Heliodorus, after he had offered sacrifice unto the LORD, and made great vows unto him that had saved his life, saluted Onias, and returned with his host to the king. Then testified he to all men, the works of

* 2 Macc. iii. 29—33. 35, 36.

HELIODORUS'S TREACHERY. 427

the great God, which he had seen with his eyes." And when he returned to the king, informed him of the wonderful transaction, and assured him that the LORD certainly defended the place: then Simon slandered Onias to Seleucus, insinuating, that he had terrified Heliodorus; on which the good high-priest resolved to go to the king and vindicate himself. Not long after this, Heliodorus aspiring to the crown, poisoned his sovereign Seleucus, in hopes of succeeding him; but his design was obstructed, and Antiochus Epiphanes, another son of *Antiochus the great*, was placed on the Syrian throne.

The Romans, by their conquests over *Antiochus the great*, had reduced the kingdom of Syria to a very low ebb, and had exacted the heavy tribute of a thousand talents annually.* The prophet Daniel foretold, that after Antiochus, *should * stand up a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom*. Seleucus was literally such, for his chief employment was to collect together, by taxing his subjects, money to pay the tribute to the Romans.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS UNDER THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

Antiochus Epiphanes was a cruel enemy and persecutor of the Jews; his character, and the revolutions of his reign, were so particularly predicted by the prophet Daniel, that I think you will be able to understand the greatest part of this prophecy, when you compare it with the account which I shall give you of this king.

* Dan. xi. 20.

THE REIGN AND CHARACTER OF ANTIOCHUS
EPIPHANES DESCRIBED.

Then shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken: yea, also the prince of the covenant.

And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.

He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province: and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers fathers: he shall scatter among them the prey and spoil, and riches, yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong-holds, even for a time.

And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army: and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.

Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain.

And both these kings hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lyes at one table; but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant: and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.

At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.

For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do, he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil many days.

Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.

And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships: and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

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He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.

But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain: yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

We will not stop to consider the prophecy at present, as it will be gradually explained by the history.

After the death of Seleucus, ANTIOCHUS his brother, was returning from Rome, where he had lived as a hostage from the time the Romans granted peace to his father Antiochus the Great. Whilst on his journey he heard of the death of Seleucus, and the attempt of Heliodorus to seize the crown, and that there were other parties forming; he applied himself to two neighbouring kings, Eumenes king of Pergamus, and Attalus his brother; and *by flattering speeches*, and great promises of friendship, prevailed on them to help him against Heliodorus, and by their means he was quietly seated on the throne; but they could not give him *the honours of the kingdom*, that is to say, *hereditary descent or free election*, as Seleucus left a son behind him, who was the lawful heir; neither had he the free choice of the people.

Antiochus was a very *wile person*, and committed such inconsistent actions, that he was generally esteemed either a fool or a madman. He was very poor

JASON'S TREACHERY. 431

when he came to the crown, for his predecessor had been obliged to exhaust the public treasure to pay the tribute to the Romans.

JASON, who was brother to Onias, took advantage of the king's necessities to gratify his own ambitious views, therefore bribed Antiochus with a large sum of money to turn out Onias, and make him high-priest in his stead. Jason, * who was an apostate himself, endeavoured to draw as many as he could from the observance of those laws and ceremonies which distinguished the Jews from all other nations in the world. He therefore obtained leave of the king to erect a place of public exercise for the training up of youth, according to the custom of the Greeks. These exercises naturally drew them from the service of the altar, and even the priests joined in forbidden customs with the heathens; of course iniquity spread very fast, which provoked the LORD to recal his people to a sense of their duty, by severe chastisements.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

There were every fifth year, games celebrated in Tyre in honour of Hercules, a heathen deity; and Antiochus being present at them, he sent several of the Jews who were of his party, to be spectators of them, and to offer for him a considerable sum; but the bearers being afraid of involving themselves in the guilt of idolatry, gave the money to the Tyrians to be employed in repairing their ships †.

* 2 Macc. iv.

† Ibid.

Cleopatra,

432 JASON SUPPLANTED.

Cleopatra, mother to PTOLEMY PHILOMATER the young king of Egypt, had taken upon herself the government of the kingdom, and the tuition of her infant son, which she managed with great care and prudence; but dying about this time, those who succeeded to the guardianship of the young prince, demanded of Antiochus the provinces of Cælo-Syria and Palestine, pleading Ptolemy's right to them; but Antiochus insisted on his right, and both parties resolved to decide the matter by war; before either proceeded to hostilities, Philometer being fourteen years old, was declared of age, and therefore great preparations were made for his ascending the throne. On this occasion Apollonius, an ambassador, was sent under pretence of congratulating him in the name of Antiochus, who was his uncle, but in reality to see how the court stood affected. His report occasioned the king to take a view of the frontiers towards Egypt, and put them in a state of defence; and in this progress he came to Jerusalem, where he was received with great marks of respect, and proceeded from thence to Phœnicia.

Jason * continued in his office but a short time. He employed Menalaus his brother to carry his tribute to the Syrian court, who treacherously supplanted him, by offering to pay a larger sum annually; and obtained the king's mandate appointing him high-priest, with which he returned to Jerusalem, and put Jason to flight. Menalaus did not keep his engagement with Antiochus, and therefore was summoned to appear with the collector of the customs, before the king. When he departed from Jerusalem, he left his brother Lyfimachus

* 2 Macc. iv.

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his deputy: in the mean time there was an insur-
 rection in Syria, which called for the king's attention,
 and he went with an army to quell it, leaving Andro-
 nicus to govern in Antioch during his absence. Me-
 nalaus took this opportunity of stealing some vessels of
 gold out of the Temple of the LORD, some of which
 he carried to Antioch, instead of the tribute due from
 Jerusalem to Syria, and some he sold by way of mer-
 chandize to the Tyrians.

ONIAS * the good high-priest, whom Jason had cir-
 cumvented, resided at this time at Antioch, and find-
 ing what Menalaus had done, reprov'd him for his
 wickedness, and then took refuge in a place of worship,
 where he thought he should be safe from the effects of
 his rage. But Menalaus prevailed on Andronicus to
 assist his cruel purposes, and by his means procured the
 death of Onias. Not only the Jews, but the surround-
 ing nations, expressed grief and indignation for the
 murder of this worthy man; and even the savage heart
 of Antiochus felt compassion, and his eyes dropt tears
 of pity and regret for the good Onias, who by his so-
 ber and modest deportment had engaged the esteem
 and veneration of the very heathens! The anger of the
 king was kindled against Andronicus for abusing the
 power he had put into his hand, and as soon as he re-
 turned, he commanded him to be stripped of the robes
 of royalty with which he had been arrayed as his vice-
 gerent, and led through the city, to the very place
 where he had caused the impious murder to be com-
 mitted; here he was put to death as his cruelty de-
 served.

* 2 Macc. iv. 34.

In such a state of affairs, so pious a man as Onias could not have been happy in the high-priest's office; and we have reason to suppose, that the malice of his enemies proved the instrument of removing him from a state of grief and anxiety, to a world of everlasting happiness.

Antiochus having, ever since the return of Apollonius from the Egyptian court, been preparing for a war, he resolved to wait no longer, but instead of expecting it in his own territories, determined to carry it into those of the enemy. He * therefore marched his forces towards the frontiers of Egypt, where being met by the forces of Ptolemy, a battle ensued, in which Antiochus obtained the victory; and improved his advantage to the utmost, by fortifying that border of his dominions, and retired with his army to Tyre for the winter.

Lyfimachus † had been assistant to Menalaus in robbing the Temple; therefore, as he was present in Jerusalem, the rage of the people for these sacrilegious acts fell upon him; which occasioned an insurrection in that city, wherein multitudes on the part of Lyfimachus were slain, and he himself perished.

Three delegates were sent from the Sanhedrim, or senate of the Jews, to complain of Menalaus, and obtained sentence against him; but Menalaus bribed Ptolemy Macron, the son of Dorymenes, to persuade the king to revoke it. Ptolemy Macron had formerly been governor of Cyprus for Ptolemy Philometer, but having been disgusted with the ministry on some account, he went over to Antiochus, and delivered the island of Cyprus into his hand; on which he was re-

* 2 Macc. iv. 40.

† Ibid 44.

A DREADFUL MASSACRE. 435

ceived among the number of his friends. Antiochus prepared in the winter for a second expedition into Egypt; he was so successful, that he could have destroyed the whole army, but stopped the slaughter his troops would have made; which so endeared him to the Egyptians, that all parts of the country submitted to him except Alexandria. Ptolemy Philometer was either taken, or voluntarily surrendered himself to Antiochus, who entertained him seemingly in a friendly manner, but with interested views. After this they had but one table, and lived together with apparent friendship, though each harboured secret jealousies, and deceived the other. You now understand, my dear, how that part of Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled, respecting the success which Antiochus (*the king of the north*) would have given against *the king of the south* (that is Egypt;) and by what means he *acquired riches and power, and became strong from a small people.*

The prophet also predicted, that *by him the prince of the COVENANT should be broken:* (by the prince of the covenant, is meant the ruler of the Jews) and *that he should pollute the SANCTUARY OF STRENGTH.* We will now see by what manner this was fulfilled.

A DREADFUL MASSACRE IN JERUSALEM.

A * false rumour was spread in Judea that Antiochus was dead; Jason took advantage of this, and with the hope of re-instating himself in the high-priest's office, collected together a thousand men, and made an assault upon Jerusalem, and at length took the city: on which Menelaus fled into the castle. Jason slaughtered great

* 2 Macc. v. 3.

436 THE SANCTUARY PROFANED.

numbers of his fellow-citizens who resisted him, but was at last driven away, and fled into the land of the Ammonites; but being detested by all men for his abominable practices, he was pursued from city to city, and at last perished in a strange country, "where he was cast out unburied, had none to mourn for him, no solemn funeral, nor sepulchre with his fathers."

Antiochus hearing an imperfect account of this transaction, supposed that the Jews had revolted from his government; he therefore, as we are told in the Books of the Maccabees, "after he had smitten Egypt, returned again, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude; and * commanded his men of war not to spare such as they met, and to slay such as went up upon the houses. Thus there was killing of young and old, making away of men, women, and children, slaying of virgins and infants. And there were destroyed within the space of three whole days, fourscore thousand, whereof forty thousand were slain in the conflict, and no fewer sold than slain. Yet was he not content with this, but presumed to go into the most holy Temple of the world. And entered proudly into the Sanctuary, and took away the golden Altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof; and the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessel, and the vials, and the centers of gold, and the vials, and the crowns, and the golden ornaments that were before the Temple, all which he pulled off. He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels: also he took the hidden treasures which he found. And when he had taken all away,

* 2 Macc. v. 12.

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he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly. Therefore there was great mourning in Israel, in every place where they were: so that the princes and elders mourned, the virgins and young men were made feeble, and the beauty of women was changed. Every bridegroom took up lamentation, and she that sat in the marriage-chamber, was in heaviness. The land also was moved for the inhabitants thereof, and all the house of Jacob was covered with confusion. So when Antiochus had carried out of the Temple a thousand and eight hundred talents, he departed in all haste into Antiochia, weening in his pride to make the land navigable, and the sea passable by foot: such was the haughtiness of his mind."

He then left governors to afflict the nation: in Jerusalem, Philip, a Phrygian, a man more barbarous than himself; and at Gerizim, Andronicus. Menelaus was continued high-priest, who was even worse than these, having a malicious mind against his countrymen the Jews.

The people of Alexandria, seeing Philometer in the hands of Antiochus, regarded him as lost to them; and therefore seated his younger brother, who had on this occasion the name of Ptolemy Evergetes the second, on the throne: he is chiefly known in history by that of Physcon. Antiochus, who had advice of what was transacting, under pretence of restoring the dethroned monarch, returned a third time to Egypt, and endeavoured to make himself absolute master of the kingdom. He made great progress in his attempt, and the young king Ptolemy Physcon, assembled his

council to concert proper measures, when they resolved to seek for a reconciliation with Antiochus, through the mediation of the Grecian ambassadors. They then made overtures of peace to Antiochus, who promised to make preparations for a solemn treaty. In this extremity, Ptolemy Physcon, and Cleopatra his sister, sent ambassadors, imploring the aid of the Romans, who agreed to protect them, and sent an embassy into Egypt. Ambassadors had also been from Rhodes to accommodate the difference; but Antiochus dissembled with them, and pretended great affection for Ptolemy Philometer; however, this prince began to see through his artifice, and sent to his brother, that he wished to come to an accommodation; which was completed by the mediation of Cleopatra, on condition the two brothers should reign jointly; so Egypt was restored to its former tranquillity.

The instant that Antiochus heard that the brothers were reconciled, he resolved to employ his whole force against them, and proceeded to hostilities; but when the Roman ambassadors arrived, he was stopt in his career, and was compelled to put an end to the war.

Antiochus, at his return from Egypt, exasperated to see himself forcibly dispossessed by the Romans of a crown which he looked upon already as his own, made the Jews, though they had not offended him in any manner, feel the whole weight of his wrath.

THE CRUEL PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS BY AN- TIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

In order to effect his barbarous purpose, Antiochus dispatched * Apollonius, the collector of his tribute to

* 1 Macc. i. 29.

Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, with a thousand men, who concealed his designs, and by plausible pretences gained the confidence of the people, who had no suspicion of their hostile intentions; but as soon as the sabbath-day arrived, Apollonius threw off the mask, and falling upon the Jews whilst they were engaged in publick worship, slew great multitudes; and when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls on every side: but took the women and children captives, and carried away the cattle. The Syrians then built a castle or fortress on a high hill in the city of David, overagainst the Temple, to overlook and annoy them; and a garrison was placed in it, where they laid up the spoils of Jerusalem. "Thus * they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it, insomuch that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them; whereupon the city was made an habitation of strangers, and became strange to those that were born in her, and her own children left her: her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach, her honour into contempt. As had been her glory, so was her dishonour increased, and her excellency was turned into mourning."

Antiochus † next issued out a decree that all his dominions should be of one religion, chiefly designing to distress the Jews. He forbade all burnt-offerings and sacrifices in the Temple of the God of Israel; commanded that the sabbaths should be profaned, the sanctuary polluted, unclean things eaten, and every means

* 1 Mac. i. 37.

† Ibid 41.

taken to make the people forget the law, and change the ordinances of the LORD ; and whosoever would not conform to the king's command, was to be put to death.

In order that this edict might be punctually obeyed, Antiochus sent officers into all the provinces of his kingdom, to see it put in execution, and instruct the people in the ceremonies and customs to which they were to conform.

No * people seemed more eager to comply with the orders of the king than the Samaritans. They presented a petition to him, in which they declared themselves not to be Jews ; and desired that the Temple built on mount Gerizim, might be dedicated to the Grecian Jupiter, which was accordingly done. But not only the Samaritans, but many Jews, some through fear and some through ambition apostatized, and became persecutors of their brethren.

The officer whom Antiochus sent into Judea and Samaria to see his decree put in execution, was called Athenæus, a man advanced in years, and well acquainted with the ceremonies of the Grecian idolatry. The holy Temple of the LORD JEHOVAH †, was by this profane wretch dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, whose image was erected on the Altar, in the inner court of the Temple ; and just before the image they built another Altar, on which they sacrificed to him. *Thus was the daily sacrifice taken away, and the Abomination of Desolation placed in the Sanctuary*, as the prophet had foretold. It was truly the *abomination of desolation*, for it was *abominable* to God, and to all his faithful people ; and it was the occasion

* 2 Macc. vi. 2.

† Ibid.

of such desolation. The Jews, a month, a Bacchus, the erected in every them. When found, they day on which of the LORD be exercised ; two their children strangled by thrown head hid themselves all burnt to

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THE HISTORY OF MATTATHIAS, &c. 441

of such *desolation*, as strikes one with horror to read of. The Jews were also compelled to go in procession once a month, and carry branches of ivy in honour of Bacchus, the god of drunkenness; idol altars were erected in every city of Judah, and incense burnt on them. Wherever any books of the *law of Moses* were found, they were torn to-pieces and burnt; and on the day on which they first sacrificed to Jupiter on the *Altar of the LORD*, they caused the most horrid cruelties to be exercised on those who adhered to the Jewish religion; two women in particular, who had circumcised their children, were led about the streets with their strangled babes hanging at their necks, and then thrown headlong from a high wall; others, who had hid themselves in a cave to keep the sabbath-day, were all burnt together.

When the prophet Daniel foretold this dreadful persecution, he also predicted, *that the people who knew their God, should be strong to do exploits, and that they should be helped with little help.* And it pleased the LORD to send them deliverance by means of Mattathias, a priest who dwelt in Modin: this pious person had five sons; Joannan, surnamed Caddis; Simon, called Thaffi; Judas, called Maccabeus; Eleazar, called Avaran; and Jonathan, whose surname was Apphus.

THE HISTORY OF MATTATHIAS AND HIS SONS.

“ When * Mattathias saw the blasphemies that were committed in Judah and Jerusalem, he said, Wo is me,

* 1 Macc. ii. 6.

442 MATTATHIAS' LAMENTATION.

wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people, and of the holy city, and to dwell there, when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy, and the sanctuary into the hand of strangers? her Temple is become as a man without glory. Her glorious vessels are carried away into captivity, her infants are slain in the streets, her young men with the sword of the enemy. What nation hath not had a part in her kingdom, and gotten of her spoils! And behold, our sanctuary, even our beauty, and our glory is laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end therefore shall we live any longer? Then Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned very fore."

This was the beautiful and pathetic lamentation of Mattathias for the miseries of Israel, and the desolation of the Holy City! Life was no longer valuable to him, now that the heathen were come into the LORD's inheritance, and had defiled the holy Temple; he therefore resolved to die, rather than to fall away from the religion of his fathers.

"When * the king's officers arrived at Modin, they endeavoured to prevail on Mattathias by gentle persuasions, and promises of honours and rewards to comply with the king's commands. But Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments: yet will I, and my sons, and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should for-

* 1 Macc. ii. 5-23.

ake the law and the ordinances : we will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand or on the left."

Just * as he had declared this pious resolution, one of the Jewish priests advanced to sacrifice on the idol altar which was erected in that city; on which Mattathias, fired with holy indignation for the honour of the LORD, slew him in the impious fact; he killed also the king's commissioner who compelled men to sacrifice, and caused the altar to be pulled down. " Then † Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons left all that they had in the city, and fled into the mountains; and they were followed by a great number of the Jews, who took their families and their cattle, and hid themselves in the wilderness."

When the king's army were informed of their flight, they resolved to pursue them, and attacked them on the sabbath-day; the Jews made no resistance, upon which a thousand of them were slain: Mattathias and his friends were greatly afflicted for the loss of them, and at first approved their zeal; but when Mattathias reflected, that they had no right to expect the particular interposition of Providence on the sabbath-day, any more than on any other day, without an express promise of assistance from the LORD, he concluded that the LAW did not require them to be inactive in their own defence; for this reason he decreed, that if the enemy assailed them on the sabbath, they should in future endeavour to repel them. And this decree was afterwards rati-

* 1 Macc. ii. 23.

† Ibid 27.

444 MARTYRDOM OF ELEAZAR.

fied and confirmed, by the consent of all the priests and leaders, to be a rule in their following wars.

Whilst * Mattathias continued in the mountains, many of the Jews were encouraged to resort to him; amongst the rest came some of the *Assideans*. These were a sect amongst the Jews who were called *Chasidim*, or the *Pious*: they were not only zealous for the law, but of many other constitutions, traditions, and forms of mortification, beyond what the law required. Those who contented themselves with what was written in the law, were called *Zadichim*, or the *righteous*.

Mattathias and his friends went round about the towns and villages, pulled down the altars, circumcised the children, put their enemies to flight, and recovered several copies of the Jewish law.

Antiochus being informed that his decrees were not so implicitly obeyed in Judea as in other nations, went thither in person to see them put in execution. He then exercised the most horrid cruelties over all such Jews as refused to abjure their religion, in order to force the rest by the dread of the like inhuman treatment, to comply with what was required of them. You shall read the affecting account of some of these martyrdoms, which are related in the books of Maccabees.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ELEAZAR AND THE SEVEN BRETHREN, WITH THEIR MOTHER.

“ Eleazar †, one of the principal scribes, an aged man, and of a well-favoured countenance, was constrained to open his mouth, and to eat swine’s flesh.

* 1 Macc. ii. 42.

† 2 Macc. vi. 18, to the end. vii.

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But he chusing rather to die gloriously, then to live stained with such an abomination, spit it forth, and came of his own accord to the torment, as it behoved them to come that are resolute to stand out against such things as are not lawful for love of life to be tasted. But they that had the charge of the wicked feast, for the old acquaintance they had with the man, taking him aside, besought him to bring flesh of his own provision, such as was lawful for him to use, and make as if he did eat of the flesh taken from the sacrifice commanded by the king, that in so doing, he might be delivered from death, and for the old friendship with them, find favour. But he began to consider discreetly, and as became his age, and the excellency of his ancient years, and the honour of his gray head, whereunto he was come, and his most honest education from a child, or rather the holy law made, and given by God: therefore he answered accordingly, and willed them straightway to send him to the grave. For it becometh not our age, said he, in any wise to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar being fourscore years old and ten, were now gone to a strange religion, and so they through mine hypocrisy, and desire to live a little time, and a moment longer, should be deceived by me, and I get a stain to mine old age, and make it abominable. For though for the present time I should be delivered from the punishment of men; yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead. Wherefore now manfully changing this life, I will shew myself such an one as mine age requireth, and leave a notable example to such as be young, to die willingly and courageously

ly for the honourable and holy laws: and when he he had said these words, immediately he went to the torment: they that led him changing the good-will they bare him a little before, into hatred, because the foresaid speeches proceeded as they thought from a desperate mind.

“ But when he was ready to die with stripes, he groaned, and said, It is manifest unto the LORD that hath the holy knowledge, that whereas I might have been delivered from death, I now endure sore pains in body, by being beaten: but in soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear him. And thus this man died, leaving his death for an example of a noble courage, and a memorial of virtue, not only unto young men, but unto all his nation.

“ It came to pass also, that seven brethren with their mother were taken, and compelled by the king, against the law, to taste swine's flesh, and were tormented with scourges and whips. But one of them that spake first, said thus: What wouldest thou ask or learn of us? we are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers. Then the king being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot. Which forthwith being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that spake first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body; the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on. Now when he was thus maimed in all his members, he commanded him, being yet alive, to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the pan: and as the vapour of the pan was for a good space dispersed, they exhorted one another with the mother, to die manfully, saying thus The LORD God

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looketh upon us, and in truth hath comfort in us, as Moses in his song, which witnessed to their faces, declared, saying, And he shall be comforted in his servants. So when the first was dead after this manner, they brought the second to make him a mocking-stock: and when they had pulled off the skin of his head with the hair, they asked him, Wilt thou eat before thou be punished throughout every member of thy body? But he answered in his own language, and said, No. Wherefore he also received the next torment in order as the former did. And when he was at the last gasp, he said, Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life. After him was the third made a mocking-stock: and when he was required to put out his tongue, and that right soon, holding forth his hands manfully, and said courageously, These I had from heaven; and for his laws I despise them, and from him I hope to receive them again. Infomuch that the king, and they that were with him, marvelled at the young man's courage, for that he nothing regarded the pains. Now when this man was dead also, they tormented and mangled the fourth in like manner. So when he was ready to die, he said thus, It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him: as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life. Afterward they brought the fifth also, and mangled him. Then looked he unto the king, and said, Thou hast power over men, thou art corruptible, thou doest what thou wilt; yet think not that our nation is forsaken of

448 THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

GOD : but abide a while, and behold his great power, how he will torment thee and thy seed. After him also they brought the sixth, who being ready to die, said, Be not deceived without cause : for we suffer these things for ourselves, having sinned against our **GOD** : therefore marvellous things are done unto us ; but think not thou that takest in hand to strive against **GOD**, that thou shalt escape unpunished.

“ But the mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honourable memory : for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bare it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the **LORD**. Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits : and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them, I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you : but doubtless, the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of his own mercy give you breath and life again, as you now regard not your own selves for his law’s sake.

“ Now Antiochus thinking himself despised, and suspecting it to be a reproachful speech, whilst the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him with oaths, that he would make him both a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers ; and that also he would take him for his friend, and trust him with affairs. But when the young man would in no wise hearken unto him, the king called his mother, and exhorted

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horted her that she would counsel the young man to
 save his life. And when he had exhorted her with
 many words, she promised him that she would counsel
 her son. But she bowing herself towards him, laugh-
 ing the cruel tyrant to scorn, spake in her country
 language on this manner, O my son, have pity
 upon me that bare thee nine months, and gave thee
 suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought
 thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of
 education. I beseech thee, my son, look upon the
 heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and con-
 sider that God made them of things that were not;
 and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tor-
 mentor, but being worthy of thy brethren, take thy
 death, that I may receive thee again in mercy, with
 thy brethren. While she was yet speaking these
 words, the young man said, Whom wait you for? I
 will not obey the king's commandment: but I will
 obey the commandment of the law that was given unto
 our fathers by Moses. And thou that hast been the
 author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shalt not
 escape the hands of God. For we suffer because of
 our sins. And though the living LORD be angry with
 us a little while, for our chastening and correction,
 yet shall he be at one again with his servants. But
 thou, O godless man, and of all others most wicked,
 be not lifted up without a cause, nor puffed up with
 uncertain hopes, lifting up thy hand against the ser-
 vants of God: for thou hast not yet escaped the judg-
 ment of Almighty God, who seeth all things. For
 our brethren who now have suffered a short pain, are
 dead under God's covenant of everlasting life; but
 thou

450 THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

thou through the judgment of God, shalt receive just punishment for thy pride. But I as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God, that he would speedily be merciful unto our nation, and that thou by torments and plagues mayest confess that he alone is God; and that in me and my brethren, the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon all our nation, may cease. Then the king, being in a rage, handled him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that he was mocked. So this man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the LORD. Last of all, after the sons, the mother died. Let this be enough now to have spoken concerning the idolatrous feasts, and the extreme tortures."

Could one suppose, that human nature would ever arrive at such a pitch of barbarity, as to inflict such torments on fellow-creatures? Tyrants like Antiochus, will not be contented without implicit obedience to every capricious command, for they have not the least regard to the consciences of men; how happy ought those to think themselves, who live under a government which is founded on the *law of God*; where there is no danger of being compelled to worship idols, and where the conscience of every one is left free, even in respect to the *outward forms* of devotion.

Are you not amazed, my dear, at the fortitude with which the good Eleazar and the seven brethren, endured the various tortures which their inhuman persecutors condemned them to? But above all think of their pious mother, subduing by *faith in God's promises and hopes of immortality*, the tender feelings of maternal love;

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COMFORTS OF MARTYRDOM. 451

love; animating her beloved children to endure the utmost extreme of pain, and even submit to death, rather than *forsake their God*! You find that all these persons trusted, that they should be partakers of the *everlasting covenant*, made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and were perfectly assured of the resurrection of the dead, and a future state of rewards and punishments.

Notwithstanding their bodies were mangled to the utmost extreme, their minds continued firm, calm, and serene; for the LORD supported them with the comforts of his holy Spirit, and by that divine power which he has over all the works of his hands, moderated their pain, and rendered them *more than conquerors* over their insulting tyrant.

THE DEATH OF MATTATHIAS.

Shortly after these martyrdoms died the good Mattathias; his last words are so edifying, that we will not pass them over.

“ Now * when the time drew near that Mattathias should die, he said unto his sons, Now hath pride and rebuke gotten strength, and the time of destruction, and the wrath of indignation. Now therefore, my sons, be ye zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. Call to remembrance what acts our fathers did in their time, so shall ye receive great honour, and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness? Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and was made lord of

† 1 Macc. ii. 49.

452 MATTATHIAS' LAST WORDS.

Egypt. Phineas, our father, being zealous and fervent, obtained the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Jesus, for fulfilling the word, was made a judge in Israel. Caleb, for bearing witness before the congregation, received the heritage of the land. David, for being merciful, possessed the throne of an everlasting kingdom. Elias, for being zealous and fervent for the law, was taken up into heaven. Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, by believing, were saved out of the flame. Daniel, for his innocency, was delivered from the mouth of the lions. And thus consider ye throughout all ages, that none that put their trust in him, shall be overcome. Fear not then the words of a sinful man; for his glory shall be dung and worms. To-day he shall be lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found, because he is returned into his dust, and his thought is come to nothing. Wherefore, ye my sons, be valiant, and shew yourselves men in the behalf of the law, for by it you shall obtain glory. And behold, I know that your brother Simon is a man of counsel; give ear unto him alway: he shall be a father unto you. As for Judas Maccabeus, he hath been mighty, and strong, even from his youth up: let him be your captain, and fight the battle of the people. Take also unto you all those that observe the law, and avenge ye the wrong of your people. Recompense fully the heathen, and take heed to the commandments of the law. So he blessed them, and was gathered to his fathers. And he died in the hundred forty and sixth year, and his sons buried him in the sepulchre of his fathers, at Modin, and all Israel made great lamentation for him."

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ISRAEL'S LAMENTATION. 453

From this pious exhortation, we may learn the true use of SCRIPTURE HISTORY. You find, my dear, that Mattathias formed his own character, by studying the examples of holy men which are recorded in the sacred volume. Imitate him in this particular, and your life will, like his, be honourable, and your death happy.

Well might Israel lament for the loss of such a protector! but Judas, whom he appointed general, inherited his father's magnanimous spirit, and performed many noble exploits, some of which I shall relate; but must first tell you, that Antiochus went to a place called Daphne, in order to be present at the celebration of some games which he instituted; during the whole time, he behaved agreeably to the character given of him by Daniel, of a *vile or contemptible person*; and did so many mad actions, before an infinite number of spectators, that he became the laughing-stock of them all.

THE HISTORY OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

The book of the Maccabees informs us, that as soon as Mattathias was buried, Judas, his son, (called Maccabeus) rose up in his stead. “ And * all his brethren helped him, and so did all they that held with his father, and they fought with chearfulness the battle of Israel. So he gat his people great honour, and put on a breast-plate as a giant, and girt his warlike harness about him, and he made battles, protecting the host with his sword. In his acts he was like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey. For he pursued the wicked, and fought them out, and burnt

* 1 Macc. iii.

up those that vexed his people. Wherefore the wicked shrunk for fear of him, and all the workers of iniquity were troubled, because salvation prospered in his hand. He grieved also many kings, and made Jacob glad with his acts, and his memorial is blessed for ever. Moreover, he went thorough the cities of Juda, destroying the ungodly out of them, and turning away wrath from Israel. So that he was renowned unto the utmost part of the earth, and he received unto him such as were ready to perish." Apollonius, governor of Syria, assembled a great army against him, but was defeated and slain. After this, Seron, who was deputy-governor of some part of Cælo-Syria, under Ptolemy Macron, attempted to subdue Judas with a numerous host of ungodly men; the Jews were faint, for they had fasted all day, and they were intimidated by the numbers of the enemy, but Judas encouraged them to fight, saying, "It * is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with the God of heaven it is all one to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company; for the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host, but strength cometh from heaven. They come against us in much pride and iniquity to destroy us and our wives and children, and to spoil us: but we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore the LORD himself will overthrow them before our face: and as for you, be ye not afraid of them." When he had spoken these words, full of confidence in the LORD, he leaped suddenly upon them, and Seron and his host were overthrown before him. Antiochus † being exceed-

* 1 Macc. iii. 18—23. † Ibid. 27.

ingly enraged at this, assembled all the forces of the kingdom, commanding them to be in constant readiness, and promised each of them a year's pay advance; but this he could not perform, though he had acquired great wealth; for he had exhausted his treasures, by foolish expences and profuse presents to particular persons; in which he verified the prophet's prediction, that he "*should scatter the prey and spoil of riches.*" Besides the difficulties to which the want of money reduced him, others arose, according to Daniel's prophecy, from *the tidings which came to him out of the east and north*: for northward the king of Armenia rebelled against him, and Persia which lay eastward, discontinued to pay him tribute: in every part of his dominions all was confusion, owing to his new edict; by which the ancient customs of so many nations were abolished, and those of the Greeks established in their room.

In *this emergency, Antiochus resolved to go himself into Persia, and leave the care of his kingdom and infant son to Lyfias, a nobleman of the royal family; to whom he gave particular orders to root the Jews out of their land, and settle strangers in every quarter. As soon as Antiochus was gone, Lyfias with cruel diligence endeavoured to execute the king's orders; he called to his assistance Ptolemy Macron, Nicanor, and Gorgias, three mighty generals, whose forces, united to his own, composed an army of forty thousand foot and seven thousand horse, besides one thousand merchants, who attended with the expectation of buying Jewish prisoners for slaves. Judas and his brethren

* 1 Macc. iii. 31.

resolved

456 JUDAS'S PIETY AND VALOUR.

resolved to make a vigorous defence, but their first care was to secure the aid of the LORD; they therefore assembled the whole congregation, and devoted the day to fasting and prayer. After this solemnity was ended, Judas marshalled them for battle, saying, “ * Arm yourselves, and be valiant men, and see that ye be in readiness against the morning, that ye may fight with these nations that are assembled together against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary. For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people, and our sanctuary. Nevertheless, as the will of God is in heaven, so let him do:” on which they resolved to keep themselves in readiness. Judas hearing that Gorgias intended to attack them in the night, removed, and came with three thousand men, poorly armed, to the camp of the enemy, which was strong and well guarded. Then said Judas to his men, “ Fear † ye not the multitude, neither be ye afraid of their assault. Remember how our fathers were delivered in the Red Sea, when Pharaoh pursued them with an army. Now therefore let us cry unto heaven, if peradventure the LORD will have mercy upon us, and remember the covenant of our fathers, and destroy this host before our face this day: that so all the heathen may know that there is one, who delivereth and saveth Israel.” * Animated by this pious speech, the men of Israel followed their valiant leader; and falling upon the heathens, made a great slaughter; and threw the camp into the utmost confusion; they afterwards put Gorgias and his party to flight, and then plundered the camp, and returned laden with rich

* 1 Macc. iii. 58, to the end.

† 1 Macc. iv. 8—11.

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spoils. The next day, which was the sabbath, they poured forth their gratitude to the LORD in humble praises and thanksgivings.

Judas and his followers, encouraged by their late success, and much increased in strength by the numbers who now joined them, resolved to oppose all who combined against them, and soon obtained a memorable victory over Timotheus and Bacchides, two of Antiochus's generals, who brought a great army against them, of which were slain twenty thousand men; and the Jews gained great riches, besides arms, and many necessaries for carrying on the war*.

Lyfias hearing of the bad success of the king's army in Judea, and of the losses they had sustained, was much embarrassed; but knowing that Antiochus was resolutely bent to destroy the Jews, he made great preparations for another expedition against them, and marched into Judea with an army of sixty thousand foot, and five thousand horse, resolving to extirpate all the inhabitants of the country. "When † Judas saw this mighty army encamped at Bethsura, he prayed, and said, Blessed art thou O SAVIOUR of Israel, who didst quell the violence of the mighty man by the hand of thy servant David, and gavest the host of strangers into the hands of Jonathan the son of Saul, and his armour-bearer. Shut up this army in the hand of thy people Israel, and let them be confounded in their power and horsemen. Make them to be of no courage, and cause the boldness of their strength to fall away, and let them quake at their destruction. Cast them down with the sword of them that love

* 2 Macc. viii. 30.

† 1 Macc. iv. 30—34.

458 THE RETREAT OF LYSIAS.

thee, and let all those that know thy name, praise thee with thanksgiving." After this pious prayer they engaged with the enemy, though the whole army amounted to no more than ten thousand men; by the aid of the LORD they gained the victory, slew five thousand of the adversary, and put the rest to flight. Lysias retired to Antioch, purposing to return with a still greater force. Judas and his company went up to mount Sion. "And * when they saw the Sanctuary desolate, and the Altar profaned, and the gates burnt up, and shrubs growing in the courts, as in a forest, or in one of the mountains, yea, and the priests chambers pulled down: They then rent their clothes, and made great lamentation, and cast ashes upon their heads, and fell down flat to the ground upon their faces, and blew an alarm with the trumpets, and cried towards heaven." Judas then appointed persons to cleanse the sanctuary; they set all parts of divine worship in order, and offered sacrifices according to the law. Thus was the Temple-worship restored exactly that day three years, on which it had been profaned by the heathens.

But though the Jews had recovered the Temple, they were greatly annoyed as they went thither to worship, by a garrison which Apollonius had built on mount Acra; Judas therefore fortified a part of mount Sion, to secure the priests and people from the frequent attacks of their enemies †.

Whilst these things were transacting, Antiochus was in Persia, levying the tribute; but he fled out of that country with dishonour; for, attempting to plunder a

* 1 Macc. iv. 38—41.

† 1 Macc. iv. 60, 61.

heathen

heathen temple in which there were great riches, the people of the country assembled and drove him away: he was therefore ill-disposed to receive the news of the defeat of his generals in Judea: the author of the book of Maccabees * informs us, that this account made him in a manner frantic with rage and disappointment; but he resolved to hasten to Jerusalem, and threatened to make that city a grave for the Jews, where he would bury the whole nation. Whilst he was preparing to execute this horrid purpose, he was struck with an incurable disease in the midst of his journey, but he was determined that nothing should stop him; he therefore ordered the driver of his chariot to redouble his speed, by which the carriage was overturned, and Antiochus so miserably bruised, that he was obliged to be confined to his bed in a little town on the road. Here he was tormented with the most excruciating pains, and all the horrors of conscious wickedness, and in a short time died. Thus, according to the prediction of the prophet †, “ *as he was going forth with great fury, to destroy, and utterly to make away many, he came to his end with none to help him.*”

How different was the latter end of the life of this tyrant, to that of the good Mattathias! Nay, how trifling were even the tortures endured by those holy martyrs who died for their religion, in comparison with the complicated agonies, both of body and mind, which Antiochus suffered! You must, my dear, readily perceive the justice of God, in taking such exemplary vengeance on so notorious a sinner; and you find, that

* 2 Macc. ix.

† Dan. xi. 45.

‡ 1 Macc. iv. 60.

460 THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EUPATOR.

Daniel's prophecies were in many instances *literally* fulfilled: but these you will understand more clearly, when you read the whole history of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.

THE HISTORY OF JUDAS MACCABEUS, UNDER THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EUPATOR.

Antiochus * Epiphanes was succeeded by his son Antiochus; this prince was very young, and his father before his death recommended the care of him to one of his favourites, named Philip, whom he also appointed regent of the kingdom, during his son's minority: but when Philip came to Antioch, he found his office filled by Lyfias, who, as soon as he heard of the king's death, took the young prince then under his tuition, and placed him on the throne, giving him the name of ANTIOCHUS EUPATOR. Philip finding himself too weak to contend with Lyfias, fled to Egypt; but was disappointed in his hopes of getting help from thence, as that kingdom was in the utmost confusion, occasioned by the disputes between Ptolemy Philometor, and his brother Physcon; who were of such opposite dispositions, that it was impossible harmony should long subsist between them. Philip, not meeting with success, returned into Syria, and seized upon Antioch. At this time Ptolemy Macron †, from being an enemy to the Jews, became their friend, on which he was called traitor by the Syrians; and indeed deservedly, because he had treacherously delivered the island of Cyprus, of which he had been appointed governor, by Ptolemy Philometor, to Antiochus Epiphanes. Ptolemy Ma-

* 1 Macc. vi. 14.

† 2 Macc. x. 13.

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cron was deprived of his government, and Lyfias appointed in his room; when the former found he had not the means of living as he had been accustomed to do, he came to the desperate resolution of poisoning himself.

In the mean time Judas Maccabeus marched out with his forces, to chastise the neighbouring nations, who were confederated to cut off the Jews; and gained several memorable victories, particularly over the Edomites*, who, with Gorgias, the Syrian general, in conjunction, opposed him with an army consisting of twenty thousand men, who were all put to the sword. Judas had likewise great success against the Ammonites, who had exercised many cruelties towards the Jews; and also obtained a memorable victory over Timotheus†, who was governor over the land of the Ammonites, the same whom Judas had so wonderfully defeated two years before. In this battle fell, of Timotheus's army, twenty thousand five hundred foot, and six hundred horsemen: Timotheus fled to Gazera, where he was slain; and Chereas, his brother, who was governor of the place; and Apollophanes, another leader of the army, shared the same fate.

The ‡ heathen nations that lived about the land of Gilead hearing of their defeat, resolved to attempt the destruction of all the Jews in these parts. The || in-

* The Idumea, or Edom, mentioned above, was a part of the land of Israel, formerly belonging to the inheritance of the tribes of Judah and Simeon, which the Edomites, who were driven out of their own country, had taken possession of during the Babylonian captivity. After their coming into this country, Hebron, which had formerly been the metropolis of Judah, became the metropolis of the Idumeans.

† 2 Macc. x. 24.

‡ 1 Macc. v. 9.

|| 1 Macc. v. 15.

462 JUDAS DIVIDES HIS FORCES.

habitants of Tyre, Sidon, Ptolemais and other places, determined at the same time to cut off the Jews of Galilee; but they all wrote to Judas for aid, and through the mercy of God were delivered from the dangers which threatened them. Judas*, by the advice of the Sanhedrim or great council, had divided his army into three parts, each consisting of eight thousand men; with the *first* he and his brother Jonathan relieved the Gileadites; and with the *second* Simon, another of his brothers, assisted the Galileans; and the *third* were left at Jerusalem, under the command of Joseph and Azarias, two principal leaders, for the defence of that city and the adjacent country. The two parties who went forth on expeditions, returned with honour and triumph, for they happily delivered many of their brethren who were shut up in prison in different cities, in order to be all massacred in one day; put the enemy to flight wherever they went, and slew an astonishing number of them. Simon † then collected together all those he had reserved from their foes, and carried them with him into the land of Judah; and they were so dispersed, as to repopulate the places which had been desolated by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Joseph ‡ and Azarias hearing of the noble exploits performed by Judas and Jonathan, were ambitious of fame; and therefore, contrary to the orders which had been given them by Judas at his departure, they led forth their forces, on an ill-projected expedition against Jamnia, a sea-port on the Mediterranean; but Gorgias falling upon their whole army, slew about two thousand men. Thus this rash attempt ended in the con-

* 1 Macc. v. 16.

† Ibid. 23.

‡ Ibid. 55.

fusion of those who undertook it; but Judas and his brethren were honoured and renowned in the sight of all Israel, and even amongst the heathens.

Demetrius the son of Seleucus Philopator, hearing of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the succession of Eupator his son to the throne of Syria, applied to the senate for assistance in regaining the kingdom of Syria, which properly belonged to him; but they, consulting the interest of Rome, resolved to support the claim of Eupator, and sent three ambassadors into Syria to settle his affairs, and regulate them according to the articles of peace which had been made with his grandfather Antiochus the Great.

Lyfias * enraged at the great success of Judas and his brethren, collected an army, consisting of eighty thousand men, with all the horse of the kingdom, and eighty elephants, and marched with this great power to invade Judæa; he began the war with the siege of Bethsura; but Judas falling upon him, slew of his army eleven thousand foot, and sixteen hundred horsemen, and put all the rest to flight; upon which Lyfias, grown weary of so unprosperous a war, came to terms of peace with Judas; and Antiochus ratified the treaty, granting them liberty to live every where according to their own laws. In this affair the ambassadors from the Romans were very servicable to the Jews.

But † this peace was not of long continuance; for those who governed in the neighbouring provinces, not being pleased with it, broke it as soon as Lyfias was gone to Antioch, and took all opportunities of renewing their former hostilities against the Jews; but Judas

* 2 Macc. xi.

† 2 Macc. xii. 2.

464 A MEMORABLE VICTORY.

overcame them, and they were soon obliged to sue for peace.

In the mean time Timotheus, having drawn all his forces together to the amount of one hundred and twenty thousand foot, and two thousand five hundred horse, pitched his camp at a place called Raphen, lying on the river Jabboc.

Here Judas found him with his numerous army, fell upon him, and having gained the victory, slew thirty thousand men. Timotheus * as he fled was taken prisoner; but on his promise to set at liberty many Jews who were captives in places under his command, he was released: a † great part of the remainder of the vanquished army fled to Carnaim, where Judas continuing the pursuit, put numbers to the sword; and then gathering together all the race of Israel that were in the land of Gilead, he took them with him in his return to Judea, in order to do as Simon had done the year before: shortly after he returned to Jerusalem; then he and all his company went up to the Temple, and gave thanks to God for the great success which he had graciously given them; for they had not lost one man, notwithstanding the dangerous enterprizes they had been engaged in. This ‡ return was about the time of Pentecost.

FURTHER CONQUESTS OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

After † the feast of Pentecost was over, Judas led out his forces again to make war upon the Idumeans ||, who had greatly molested the Jews in the battle which

* 2 Macc. xii. 24, 25. † 1 Macc. v. 44. ‡ 2 Macc. xii. 31. || 1 Macc. v. 65.

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COLLECTION MADE FOR SIN-OFFERING. 465

he fought with them; several of the Jews were slain*, but at last Judas obtained the victory, and Gorgias narrowly escaped. The † next day, being the sabbath, Judas withdrew his forces to Odollam, a city near the field of battle; and ‡ the day after, on stripping the slain, it appeared that they had concealed under their garments, things which they had taken among the spoil, which formerly belonged to idols; if these men had lived, they would have been condemned to death as Achan was, because they, through covetousness, broke the law of God ||.

Judas and his company perceiving by what means God had been provoked to give those persons up to their enemies, praised the LORD, and offered up their prayers for pardon of their own sin; and then making a collection through the whole camp, which amounted to a large sum, sent it to Jerusalem, to provide sin-offerings for the expiation of this offence, that wrath might not fall upon the whole congregation of Israel §.

After ** this Judas carrying the war into the southern parts of Idumea, smote Hebron and all the towns

* 2 Macc. xii. 33—37. † Ibid. 38. ‡ Ibid. 39—45.

|| Deut. vii. 25, 26. § The author of the second book of Maccabees, seems to have misunderstood this action, as if the people were making atonement for the *persons* of the deceased: it is not agreeable to scripture to offer prayers for the dead, as no intercession of the living can avail for them: but as these men had brought a curse on the nation, this could only be removed, by each man presenting a sin-offering; by which he expressed his sorrow that the honour of God had been offended, and his own resolution to avoid such crimes; acknowledging the justice of the LORD in inflicting punishment on the offenders, and imploring him to restore his blessing to his people.

** 1 Macc. v. 59—68.

adjacent; he then passed into the land of the Philistines, and having taken Azotus, formerly called Ashdod, he pulled down their heathen altars, burnt their carved images, and took the spoils of the place; doing the same to the rest of the cities of that country, over which he prevailed, he led back his men into Judea loaded with the spoils of their enemies.

But the garrison of the Syrians still holding the fortresses of Acra in Jerusalem, they greatly molested the Jews; on which Judas resolved to besiege them, and for this purpose provided himself with all the usual engines for assaulting it. But * some of the apostate Jews, who had enlisted themselves in the garrison, found means to get forth, and flying to Antioch, informed the king and council of his proceedings; upon which an † army was assembled of one hundred thousand foot, twenty thousand horse, with thirty elephants, and three hundred armed chariots of war; “ upon the elephants were strong towers of wood, and in each thirty valiant men, besides an Indian to guide the beast. The king himself with Lyfias his tutor, marched at the head of this formidable host; and when the sun shone upon the gold and brass shields, they appeared like lamps of fire, scattered over the hills and plains; the noise of this multitude marching, and the rattling of their armour, seemed to threaten destruction to all who should dare to oppose them. In their way to Judea, passing by the fortresses of Bethsura, Lyfias begun as formerly, with the siege of that place, which made a brave resistance for many days. Judas having collected his forces, though far inferior to those of the enemy, en-

* 1 Macc. vi. 19, 20.

† Ibid. 28.

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* 1 Macc.

camped at Bathzacharias, over against the king's camp; as soon as the morning came, both armies prepared for the battle, and Judas and his men began with great fierceness; but after having slain about six hundred men, withdrew from the fight, and made a safe retreat into Jerusalem: the occasion of their retreating was the death of Eleazar, one of Judas's brothers, who was lost by a very rash and desperate attempt. Observing one of the elephants higher and more advanced than the rest, he supposed the king was on it; therefore running furiously through the troops, he made his way to the beast, and getting under him, ran his spear into his belly, on which the elephant fell upon him and crushed him to death*.

Eleazar, considering all things, though he signalized his courage, and testified his love for his country, acted wrong; because he had reason to hope, that the Lord would deliver *all* his people out of the hands of the heathen; he had therefore no need to sacrifice his own life, for he might have promoted the honour of God more, in defending his post, than by depriving his party of a principal commander in this inconsiderate manner.

The † royal army continued the siege of Bethsura, which being in danger of wanting provisions, and hearing, it is likely, that the king's party prevailed, surrendered, and a Syrian garrison was placed in it.

From thence Antiochus marched to Jerusalem ‡, in order to besiege the sanctuary. The Jews made a valiant resistance, but at last were on the point of submitting, when they were most providentially relieved. For || Lyfias having received an account that Philip,

* 1 Macc. vi. 43. † Ibid. 20. ‡ Ibid. 51—54. || Ibid. 55.

468 DEATH OF MENELAUS.

whom Antiochus Epiphanes had appointed guardian of his son was arrived, and had taken possession of Antioch, and there assumed the government of the Syrian empire *, he found it necessary to make peace with the Jews, that he might be at liberty to return to Antioch; and accordingly, peace being granted to them on very advantageous terms, and sworn to by Antiochus, he was admitted within the fortifications of the sanctuary; but † when he saw how strong they were, he caused them, contrary to his treaty, to be demolished, and returned towards Syria.

Menelaus ‡ the high-priest, in expectation of recovering his office, and being made governor of Judea, attended this expedition, and was very officious against his own people; but Lyfias, finding the war was so unprosperous, accused this wretch to the king, as the original author of it; and he was condemned to be cast headlong into a tower of ashes, where he miserably perished. On || his death the office of high-priest was granted to Alcimus, a man altogether as wicked as Menelaus.

On the king's return to Antioch, Philip was driven thence and suppressed. I before mentioned, that ambassadors had been sent from Rome to regulate the affairs of Syria; these ambassadors finding that the king had more ships and elephants than the treaty allowed, caused the supernumerary ships to be burnt, and the elephants to be slain. This measure occasioned great discontent amongst the people, and a man called Lep- tines, being particularly exasperated, murdered one of

* 1 Macc. vi. 57.

† Ibid. 62.

‡ 2 Macc. xiii. 3—8.

|| 2 Macc. xiv. 3.

the ambassadors whilst he was bathing. An embassy was immediately dispatched to Rome to excuse the king, but the senate dismissed them with silent indignation.

Demetrius the son of Seleucus, availed himself of this opportunity, landed in Syria *, obtained the kingdom, and caused Antiochus to be put to death.

Alcimus, who had been appointed high-priest, was rejected by the Jews, because he had polluted † himself with conforming to the manners of the Greeks; he therefore assembled all the apostate Jews, and going at the head of them, addressed the new king for relief against Judas and his brethren, accusing them of slaying many of the king's friends, and driving others out of the country; and by this accusation, so prejudiced the king against them, that he sent Bacchides, governor of Mesopotamia into Judea ‡ with an army, and joined Alcimus in the commission with him, for making war upon the Jews. On their first arrival they proceeded with artifice, and pretended to come with peaceable intentions, but Judas and his brethren were aware of their treachery;—some of the Jews, however, were deceived by them, and were destroyed; amongst these were sixty of the Assideans, and several of the scribes or doctors of the law. After this Bacchides returned to the king, but Alcimus remained with a part of the forces, who drew many deserters || to him, and much disturbed the state of Israel. This provoked Judas § to take the field, in order to punish those who had revolted. Alcimus went again to the king,

* 1 Macc. vii. 1—4. 2 Macc. xiv. 1, 2. † 2 Macc. xiv. 3.

‡ 1 Macc. vii. 8—20. || Ibid. 21, 22. § Ibid. 23, 24.

and having presented him with a crown of gold, and other gifts, renewed his complaints against Judas; which being seconded by some in the court who were enemies to the Jews, Demetrius was induced to send another army to subdue them, under Nicanor their old enemy; commanding him to cut off Judas, disperse his followers, and establish Alcimus in the high-priest's office. Nicanor was * at first unwilling to make war on Judas, but being urged by the king, he at length pursued it with fury; and having spoken many blasphemous words against the Temple, and threatened to destroy it, and build a temple to Bacchus in the room of it, he was slain, and his army routed by Judas. After † this, the Jews took out the spoils, cut off Nicanor's head, and the impious hand which he had lifted against the holy Temple, and hanged them upon one of the towers of Jerusalem: they then kept a day of great rejoicing, which was afterwards observed as an annual festival.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

We must now begin to take a view of the Roman empire, which was described to Daniel in the remarkable vision you formerly read, “under the image of a fourth beast, dreadful, and strong exceedingly, which, with great iron teeth devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.” When you read the history of the Romans at large, you will find, that this was a very just representation of their rapid and irresistible acquisition of power and dominion.

* 1 Macc. vii. 26—29. 2 Macc. xiv. 12—25. † 1 Macc. vii. 47.

Judas * Maccabeus saw himself continually attacked by the whole force of the Syrians, and that they were so perfidious there was no relying on them in any treaty of peace. He had no aid to expect from the neighbouring nations, and the Romans were generally esteemed for justice and valour, and always ready to assist *weak* states against oppressive kings; he therefore resolved to seek an alliance with them.—But could the Jewish nation, which had hitherto been so wonderfully supported by an ALMIGHTY POWER, be reckoned amongst weak nations? It is true, their army was small in number when compared with their enemies, and they were frequently assaulted, but GOD had hitherto enabled “*four of them to chase an hundred, and an hundred to put ten thousand to flight;*” he had animated their breasts with the courage of lions, and shielded them from the most furious attacks of their enemies; they had returned victorious from many battles, without the loss of a single man; and none had fallen but through their own rashness, folly, or disobedience to the Divine Law. What need then had Judas and the chosen people of the LORD, to seek for protection from a heathen power? It was degrading their HEAVENLY KING in the sight of idol worshippers, to suppose that they stood in need of their assistance; and the *honour of the LORD* required, that those who thus distrusted him, should be taught, by chastisement, to repent of their want of confidence in his Almighty Power. For you must remember, that by the Israelites (as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) GOD had promised to shew forth his glory, and convey the blessings of

* 1 Macc. viii. 1.

Redemption

472 LEAGUE WITH THE ROMANS.

Redemption to all nations; therefore it was not *possible* for them to be cut off, whilst they kept those laws which were given to distinguish and separate them from heathens, and continued to put their trust in the power of the LORD: neither could they be considered as the peculiar people of GOD, or expect miraculous assistance any longer, than whilst they fulfilled the conditions of the covenant made with their forefathers. And we may observe, throughout the whole course of the Jewish history, that when this people entered into leagues with heathen powers, they were always unsuccessful.

Eupolemus * and Jason, the two ambassadors whom Judas sent to the Roman senate, met with a very gracious reception; and the Jews and Romans entered into a mutual engagement, to assist each other both by sea and land; so that Judas and his followers, instead of fighting only *for their own lives and their laws, and the recovery of their inheritance*, as they had hitherto done, were now bound to assist, if called upon, the ambitious designs of that people who meditated the subjection of the whole earth. Though sometimes one heathen nation, and sometimes another, were, (after the apostacy of the Israelites under their kings) suffered to prevail, for the punishment of the wickedness of others; yet, it was not lawful for the *remnant* of GOD's people, (who were preserved for other purposes) to join with them, without an express command from GOD: their only business was, to live quietly under the government which had dominion over them; as long as they were allowed the free exercise of their religion, and the possession of their inheritance; to wait with pati-

* 1 Macc. viii. 21.

ence for the Messiah; or in case they were persecuted on account of their faith, and compelled to worship idols, and driven from their land, they were to defend themselves by every means in their power, that was consistent with their duty to God; and to rely with perfect confidence on the aid of the LORD, who would certainly be unto them a *rock of defence against their enemies*, and render human alliances unnecessary. You now understand, my dear, that Judas took a very improper step in courting the protection of the Romans; and you will find, that it was attended with fatal consequences.

Demetrius * having received an account of the defeat and death of Nicanor, sent Bacchides, and Alcimus, a second time, who encamped before Jerusalem with an army of twenty thousand foot, and two thousand horse: Judas had no more than three thousand men with him to oppose them; and of these, all but eight hundred, terrified with the formidable appearance of the enemy, fled from the host. Personal courage this renowned general possessed to a great degree; but what was his *natural force*, assisted only by a small number, without the “*shield and buckler of his salvation, and the sword of his excellency?*” He was now left to fight his own battle, for the LORD withheld aid from this new ally of the Romans: confidence of victory no longer inspired the breast of Judas; he could not now say to his fearful troops, as on a former occasion, “† *It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few, and with the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company: for*

* 1 Macc. ix. 1.

† 1 Macc. iii. 18—20.

474 DEATH OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host, but strength cometh from heaven." Danger presented itself to his view in all its horrors, and "he was troubled in mind, and sore dismayed;" but still solicitous for his country's honour and his own fame, he resolved not to give his foes cause to triumph in his shameful flight, therefore exerted the utmost efforts of human skill, and with astonishing bravery supported the combat for some time, "so that the earth shook with the noise of the armies on both sides;" but at length, overpowered by numbers, he fell at the feet of his adversaries! Thus died Judas Maccabeus, who, whilst he continued to rely entirely on the LORD, was, "*in himself a host*;" and whose name struck terror into the minds of mighty warriors. He was, on the whole, a most amiable and worthy character; and though the DIVINE BEING punished his inconsiderate application to the Romans, by deserting him in the hour of danger (as he chastised his faithful servant Moses for striking the rock, by not suffering him to enter the promised land). I think we cannot doubt, but that after death, God exalted him to that state of happiness allotted for the noble army of martyrs: as he had been, in so remarkable a manner, the restorer and preserver of the divine law, and the deliverer and protector of his country.

There was a general lamentation throughout Israel, for the loss of this valiant commander; and he was honourably buried by his brothers, Simon and Jonathan, in the sepulchre of his father, at Modin, having governed Israel six years.

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THE HISTORY OF JONATHAN, THE BROTHER
AND SUCCESSOR OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

After * the death of Judas, the people were greatly disheartened. Bacchides prevailed every where; a famine also increased their distress; which I think we may judge, from God's usual dealings with his people, was sent as a chastisement, for their distrust of him, and desertion of their general. Many of the friends of Judas were put to death, or cruelly used by Bacchides, so that there was great affliction in Israel, "such as had not been since the times of the prophets;" they therefore resolved to appoint Jonathan, the brother of Judas, to be their prince and captain; upon which he took the government, and collected forces together to resist the enemy; which Bacchides hearing, endeavoured to get him into his power; but Jonathan, and Simon his brother, fled with their company into the wilderness of Tekoa; and in order to secure their goods and baggage, sent them, under the conduct of John, another of Judas's brothers, to their friends the Nabatheans; but John was intercepted in his march by the Jambrians, a tribe of Arabs, who slew him, took the rest prisoners, and seized upon their effects. Not † long after this, Jonathan had an opportunity of revenging his brother's death, and obtained a great deal of spoil: he exerted himself as his brother Judas had done, for the protection of God's people, and the blessing of the LORD constantly attended him.

Alcimus ‡, by the aid of Bacchides, had fully established himself in the high-priest's office, and made several alterations for the corruption of the Jewish worship,

* 1 Macc. ix. 23.

† Ibid. 35.

‡ Ibid. 54.

and

476 DEMETRIUS'S EXCESSES.

and bringing it to resemble the superstition of the heathen; at last he gave orders to pull down the wall which separated the Jews from the Gentile converts; but whilst it was doing, he was suddenly struck with the palsy, and died in great torment; after his decease, the land of Israel enjoyed peace for two years. Soon after the death of Alcimus, Demetrius, who had seized Syria, and slain Antiochus Eupator, was acknowledged king by the Romans.

Jonathan made use of the interval of peace, in restoring the government of the Jews, both in church and state, and repairing the walls and fortifications of Sion: this excited the envy of the adverse party, who formed a plot which might have proved fatal to him, but that DIVINE PROVIDENCE interposed in his preservation. He *, and his brother Simon, had afterwards great success against Bacchides; who, grown weary of war, and tired of those who had engaged him in it, put several of them to death, and concluded peace with Jonathan †.

Demetrius, after a few years, gave himself up entirely to luxury, and neglected publick affairs; this disgusted his subjects, and they raised a conspiracy against him. Ptolemy Philometor, had taken offence at some proceedings of Demetrius towards him, therefore by way of revenge set up an usurper, whose real name was Balas, but he pretended to be Alexander, the son of Antiochus Epiphanes: great numbers of people flocked to him. Demetrius ‡ collected his forces with all possible expedition, and Jonathan armed his troops. Both parties courted the friendship of Jonathan; but

* 1 Macc. ix. 58.

† Ibid. 71.

‡ 1 Macc. x. 2.

as Demetrius had been a bitter enemy to the Jews, Jonathan durst not confide in him: he therefore accepted Alexander's offers, and having the consent of all the Jews, assumed the high-priest's office, and officiated at the feast of Tabernacles *. There had been a vacancy in the priesthood for seven years, from the death of Alcimus; but from this time it continued for many years in the family of the Maccabees, called Asmoneans, from Asmoneus, the great grandfather of Mattathias. Whether the Maccabees were of the race of Josedek, is uncertain, but they were undoubtedly of the family of Aaron; and as none appeared who had a better claim, Jonathan had a right to the office, especially as he was chosen with the consent of all the people.

The contending kings of Syria having taken the field, Demetrius was at length overpowered and slain †. Alexander, having by this victory secured the whole empire of Syria, sent to Ptolemee ‡, king of Egypt, desiring to have his daughter Cleopatra to wife, which he consented to, and the marriage was accordingly solemnized. Jonathan || went by invitation * to the wedding-feast, and was received by both kings with great respect, especially by Alexander; who caused him to be clothed in purple, enrolled amongst the chief of his friends, and take place amongst the first princes of his kingdom; he constituted him also general of his forces in Judea, and gave him a high office in his palace.

These extraordinary honours excited the envy of several persons, who brought accusations against Jonathan; but the king rejected them all, and caused proclamation

* 1 Macc. x. 21. † 1 Macc. x. 50. ‡ 1 Macc. x. 51—58. || Ibid. 59—66.

478 APOLLONIUS'S MESSAGE.

to be made, that no one should presume to speak evil of him, and Jonathan returned into Judea.

Alexander * having obtained quiet possession of the Syrian throne, abandoned himself to pleasure, ease, and luxury, and left the care of his affairs to a favourite, named Ammonius. On which Demetrius, the son of the late king, being now grown up to manhood, resolved to attempt the recovery of the crown, and was joined by Apollonius, the governor of Cælo-Syria. On this, Alexander took the field with his army, and called for the assistance of his father-in-law Ptolemy.

Apollonius† having embraced the party of Demetrius, gathered a great army together, and encamped at Jamnia, from whence he sent the following haughty message to Jonathan the high-priest. “Thou † alone liftest up thyself against us, and I am laughed to scorn for thy sake, and reproached, and why dost thou vaunt thy power against us in the mountains? Now therefore, if thou trustest in thine own strength, come down to us into the plain field, and there let us try the matter together; for with me is the power of the cities. Ask, and learn who I am, and the rest that take our part, and they shall tell thee, that thy foot is not able to stand before our face; for thy fathers have been twice put to flight in their own land. Wherefore now thou shalt not be able to abide the horsemen, and so great a power, in the plain, where is neither stone nor flint, nor any place to flee unto.” Jonathan immediately marched out of Jerusalem with ten thousand men, took Joppa, and defeated Apollonius's army with a great slaughter;

* Josephus's Antiquities. † Supposed by Prideaux to have been governor of Cælo-Syria, and a former adherent to Demetrius.

† 1 Macc. x. 70—73.

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DEMETRIUS'S FALSHOOD. 479

and having set fire to several cities belonging to the enemy, returned to Jerusalem with their spoils. Alexander hearing of this victory gained in his interest, sent to Jonathan a buckle of gold, such as were only worn by the royal family, and gave him also the city of Accaron, and the territory belonging to it*.

Alexander having greatly offended Ptolemy Philometer king of Egypt, he persuaded the Syrians to restore the kingdom to Demetrius, the true heir; who was accordingly seated on the throne of his ancestors. Upon this revolution, Alexander wasted the country round Antioch with fire and sword; a battle ensued, and Alexander being vanquished, fled with only five hundred horse to Zabdiel, an Arabian prince with whom he had entrusted the care of his children; here he was treacherously slain.

Demetrius succeeding in Syria, in consequence of this victory, called himself *Nicator*, that is, the conqueror†. At first he treated Jonathan very graciously, and established him in the high-priesthood, and granted him many privileges and immunities. Jonathan, in return, performed some great services for him; but Demetrius was of a very oppressive, unjust disposition, and behaved afterwards with shameful ingratitude, which alienated the Jews from his interest. † He had also rendered himself hateful to the rest of his subjects, who revolted from him in favour of young Antiochus, the son of Alexander, called Theos, or the Divine, who was placed upon the throne, and Demetrius driven away.

Jonathan being justly provoked by the ingratitude of the late king, accepted of an invitation made him by

* 1 Macc. x. 89.

† 1 Macc. xi. 26.

† Ibid. 53.

480 ROMAN LEAGUE RENEWED.

the new monarch; on which he was confirmed in the high-priest's office, allowed to wear the purple and the golden buckle, and to have place among the king's chief friends, with many other privileges. * Jonathan and his brother Simon assisted Antiochus against Demetrius, and also drove the heathen out of the fortress of Bethsura.

JONATHAN MAKETH A LEAGUE WITH THE ROMANS.

Jonathan †, on his return to Judea, finding all quiet, sent ambassadors to renew the league which the Romans had made with Judas Maccabeus; who were received by the senate with honour, and dismissed with satisfaction: and they had likewise orders, in their return from Rome, to address the Lacedæmonians as brethren; and Jonathan wrote a letter, to assure them of their remembrance and intercession to God in their behalf. Jonathan very justly observed, in this letter, that "the Jews stood in no need of the friendship of other nations, having the holy books of scripture to comfort them, and help from heaven, to succour and deliver them from their enemies;" but his conduct in respect to making alliances with other nations, was inconsistent with these expressions of confidence in the LORD. The Lacedæmonians, as well as the Romans, were *heathens*, and as such at enmity with God.

During the absence of his ambassadors, Jonathan and his brother Simon suppressed, in different parts of the land of Judah, the adversaries of Antiochus; and at length obliged the heathens to abandon the fortress of Acra, in Jerusalem, which they had so long kept possession of.

* 1 Macc. xi. 58.

† Ibid. xii. 1.

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TRYPHON'S TREACHERY. 481

Tryphon *, the person who had been chiefly instrumental in establishing Antiochus on the throne, with a view of assassinating him, and gaining it for himself, threw off the mask; but despairing of ever being able to persuade Jonathan to join in his wicked plot, he resolved to destroy him; and therefore marched towards Judea with a great army, in order to get him into his power: but Jonathan met him at Bethsan with forty thousand men: this disconcerted Tryphon's scheme; he therefore changed his measures, and proceeded with flattery and dissimulation to consult him about their common interest, and promising to resign Ptolemais into his hands, prevailed with him to dismiss all his troops excepting three thousand men; two thousand of which he inconsiderately sent into Galilee, and with the remainder went with Tryphon to Ptolemais, expecting to have the place delivered to him: but as soon as he and his company were got within the walls, the gates were shut upon them, Jonathan made prisoner, and all his men put to the sword. Orders were then sent to destroy those in Galilee also; but they having timely notice of the fate of their brethren, resolutely determined to defend themselves; which the enemy perceiving, marched off; and the Jewish troops returned safely to Jerusalem, where great lamentations were made for the loss of their governor.

The heathen nations, on the capture of Jonathan, renewed their hostilities against the Jews; upon which Simon went up to the Temple, called the people together, and encouraged them, saying, "Ye † yourselves know, what great things I and my brethren, and my

* 1 Macc. xii. 42

† 1 Macc. xiii. 3—6.

father's house have done for the laws, and the sanctuary; the battles also, and troubles which we have seen, by reason whereof all my brethren are slain for Israel's sake, and I am left alone. Now therefore be it far from me, that I should spare mine own life in any time of trouble: for I am no better than my brethren. Doubtless I will avenge my nation and sanctuary, and our wives, and our children: for all the heathen are gathered to destroy us, of very malice." This noble speech revived their drooping spirits, and they immediately chose him for their commander; and under his conduct and direction, proceeded to the completion of the fortification which Jonathan had begun at Jerusalem *.

On Tryphon's approach to invade the land, Simon led forth a great army against him; on which the former not daring to engage, he endeavoured to deceive Simon also, by pretending that he had seized Jonathan only because he owed a large sum of money to the king; promising to set him at liberty, if his brother would send the money, and Jonathan's two sons to be hostages for their father's fidelity. Simon perceived that this was mere artifice, but willing to do every thing in his power to save his brother's life, he complied with the terms. Shortly after this the treacherous Tryphon put Jonathan to death, and then returned to Antioch, and caused the young king to be assassinated, reporting that he died suddenly; then seizing the crown, declared himself king of Syria.

When Simon heard of his brother's death, he sent, and fetched his bones, and buried them in the family

* In Jonathan's days the Jews built a temple in Egypt.

sepulchre at Modin, where he erected a very famous monument of white marble to his memory; near which he placed seven pyramids, two for his father and mother, five for his brothers, and one for himself, round which he built a stately portico.

Jonathan's character as a warrior, cuts a noble figure in the Jewish history; he likewise laboured for the prosperity of his country, and seems to have been a man of good morals; but I think it appears, that he was too fond of pomp and magnificence; for as high-priest of the Jews, he should have disdained the purple robe and the golden buckle, which so far from adding to his dignity, debased him. The sacred vestment that distinguished him as the minister of God, was the most honourable garment he could wear. He was certainly guilty of an error, as well as Judas Maccabeus, in courting the friendship of the Romans; for as they were a great and increasing empire, and the Jews at that time a small people, it appeared as if they thought "*to * strengthen themselves in their strength, and trust to the shadow of ROME;*" which was inconsiderately flying from the standard of the LORD JEHOVAH. If there had been prophets at this time, I make no doubt they would have been sent to reprove Jonathan; or had he properly attended to the written prophecies, and the histories of the kings of Israel and Judah, he would have discovered that he ought not "*to † love them that hated God,*" but at all events, to avoid mixing with heathens. Jonathan's situation, to be sure, was a very difficult one, and he was subject to human infirmities: God, who permitted him to be deceived to his destruc-

* Isa. xxx. 2.

† 2 Chron. xix. 2.

484 SIMON DESERTS TRYPHON.

tion, is a God of infinite compassion: he alone, could judge of the motives of Jonathan's actions, and whatever faults were committed by him through mistake, or want of information, were certainly pardoned by the divine goodness.

SIMON SENDETH AMBASSADORS TO THE ROMANS.

Tryphon having usurped the throne of Syria, sent a splendid embassy, with costly gifts to the Romans, in hopes they would acknowledge him king; but they eluded his expectations, by causing the name of Antiochus to be engraved on their present, as if it came from him. Simon * likewise sent ambassadors, for the insatiation of sending to the Romans, possessed his mind as it had his brother's before him. They were honourably entertained; great concern was expressed for the death of Jonathan, and satisfaction for the successes of Simon. The former leagues were renewed, and being written on tables of brass, were sent to Jerusalem. Those also, with the Lacedæmonians, and other nations, were confirmed to the Jews.

All † the priests, elders, and people of the Jews, met together in a general assembly at Jerusalem, when it was agreed, by unanimous consent, to establish the high priesthood and supreme government of the nation on Simon and his descendants, by a publick act, in which were recited, the good deeds which had been wrought by Simon and his family: a copy of this they caused to be engraven on tables of brass, and hung up in the sanctuary; the original was deposited in the

* 1 Macc. xiv. 20.

† Ibid 35.

SIMON'S SOVEREIGNTY ESTABLISHED. 485

treasury of the Temple, and from that time Simon took upon him the stile, state, and authority of prince, as well as high priest. Desirous of being acknowledged as such by the Romans, he sent ambassadors to renew the league with them, and also a present of a golden shield, of the value of fifty thousand pounds of our money: both the embassy and present were cordially received, and the senate caused letters to be written to the different states who were then dependent on them, styling the Jews their friends, and commanding that none should injure or molest them, nor harbour any fugitives or traitors of that nation.

Thus did the *people of God* submit to be *shielded* by the ROMANS, as if the *shield of the SALVATION of the LORD* had been insufficient for them!

Simon had sufficient cause to desert Tryphon, therefore sent ambassadors to treat for peace and alliance with Demetrius, presenting him with a golden crown, as a token of submission to his government. Demetrius readily granted a confirmation of the priesthood to Simon, with a release of all taxes, tolls, and tributes; and an act of oblivion of all past hostilities, on condition of his joining with him against Tryphon; all this was cordially agreed to by the Jews, and Simon declared sovereign prince of the Jewish nation, and the land freed from all foreign tyranny.

Simon, finding his son John (afterwards called Hyrcanus) to be a very valiant man, made him general of all the forces in Judea, and sent him to live in Gazara, where his presence was most necessary.

Demetrius was taken prisoner in a war with the Parthians, and carried into Parthia, where he married the

king's daughter, which so enraged his queen, that she sent to his brother Antiochus, who was in Crete, and offered to marry him if he would join his interest with her's against Tryphon; this offer he readily accepted: before he landed, he sent a letter to Simon, offering to confirm all the privileges which the Jews at that time enjoyed, and to honour the Temple. Simon, as a proof of his friendly disposition, sent him men, arms, and money, to assist him in carrying on his war; but the perfidious king broke through all his promises, rejected his offers, and sent Athenobius, his friend, into Judea, as ambassador, to demand Joppa, and Gazara, and the fort at Jerusalem; or instead of them, a thousand talents of silver: these conditions were too unreasonable to be complied with; but to preserve peace, Simon offered to give an hundred talents. Athenobius, enraged at his refusal, made no reply, but hastened back to report what he had heard and seen. He told the king, that Simon lived in a style of the utmost magnificence, and that he absolutely refused to comply with his demands. Antiochus now considered Simon as a rival, and was jealous of his power; he therefore resolved to humble him, and having made Cenebeus, one of his nobles, captain and governor of the sea-ports of Palestine, sent him with one part of his army against Simon, and with the other, he himself pursued Tryphon, who continued to fly from place to place, till at last he was overtaken and put to death.

Cenebeus in the mean time marched into Judea, and began to kill and plunder the Jews; Simon being informed of these hostilities, “ called * for his two eldest

* 1 Macc. xvi. 2, 3.

sons, Judas and John, and said unto them, I and my brethren, and my father's house, have ever from our youth unto this day fought against the enemies of Israel, and things have prospered so well in our hands, that we have delivered Israel oftentimes. But now I am old, and ye, by God's mercy, are of a sufficient age: be ye in stead of me, and my brother, and go and fight for our nation, and the help from heaven be with you." A chosen army, consisting of twenty thousand valiant men, with a proportionable number of horse, were assembled, and they marched to meet the adversary, and soon came in sight of the formidable host; an engagement followed, in which Cenebeus lost two thousand men, the rest fled to their strong-holds. The two brothers having driven the Syrians away, returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

Antiochus Sidetes, after vanquishing Tryphon, and destroying his faction, settled all things upon the same footing as they were before these disturbances began.

About * a year after the war with Antiochus, Simon making a circuit through the cities of Judah, to see that all things were properly regulated, came to Jericho, accompanied by his two sons, Mattathias and Judas. Ptolemy, the son of Abubus, who had married one of his daughters, was governor of the place, they therefore took up their residence with him; but he was a very wicked ambitious man, and had formed a scheme to get the government of Judea for himself: in order to accomplish it, he made a sumptuous entertainment, under the pretence of honouring his guests; but while they were rejoicing in his apparent hospitality,

* 1 Macc. xvi. 14.

488 SIMON'S EULOGIUM.

caused them to be assassinated. Ptolemy made immediate application to the king of Syria, promising that he would deliver Judea into his hands, if he would furnish him with an army; he also sent to Gazara, and offered great rewards to those who would kill John, and dispatched others to take possession of Jerusalem. John was apprized of Ptolemy's proceedings, and put those to death who attempted to destroy him: he then hastened to secure the holy City and Temple, and used every measure to secure the safety and peace of the people. Ptolemy finding his plot defeated, fled to Philadelphia, till such time as the army from Antiochus should arrive; what became of him afterwards, is uncertain.

There were great lamentations in Judea, on account of the death of Simon, who was universally beloved; for he was a man of piety, bravery, honour, and humanity, and a great benefactor to his country. The author of the Book of Maccabees, has given us his eulogium, as follows: "As* for the land of Judea, that was quiet all the days of Simon: for he sought the good of his nation, in such wise, as that evermore his authority and honour pleased them well. And as he was honourable in all his acts, so in this, that he took Joppe for an haven, and made an entrance to the isles of the sea, and enlarged the bounds of his nation, and recovered the country. And gathered together a great number of captives, and had the dominion of Gazara and Bethsura, and the tower, out of the which he took all uncleanness, neither was there any that resisted him. Then did they till their ground in peace, and the earth gave her increase, and the trees of the field their fruit. The

* 1 Macc. xiv. 4—15.

ancient men sat all in the streets communing together of good things, and the young men put on glorious and warlike apparel. He provided victuals for the cities, and set in them all manner of munition, so that his honourable name was renowned unto the end of the world. He made peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great joy: for every man sat under his vine, and his fig-tree, and there was none to fray them: neither was there any left in the land to fight against them: yea, the kings themselves were overthrown in those days. Moreover, he strengthened all those of his people that were brought low: the law he searched out, and every contemner of the law, and wicked person, he took away. He beautified the Sanctuary, and multiplied the vessels of the Temple." These were noble acts, and deservedly gained him the esteem of the people; but I am persuaded, the advantages he procured for them would have been more permanent, if he had not put them as he did, under the protection of the Romans; for having by the aid of the LORD once more recovered the land of Judah from subjection to earthly monarchs, "*their* * strength was to sit still," and trust to the protection of their heavenly King; bending their whole attention to the preservation of their law, the practice of moral virtues, and holiness to the LORD.

THE GOVERNMENT OF JOHN HYRCANUS.

Antiochus being informed of the death of Simon, besieged Judea, and the inhabitants were on the point of perishing with famine. Hyrcanus was therefore obliged to make a disadvantageous treaty; in a short time after, Antiochus and his whole army were cut off

* Isa. xxx. 7.

in one night by the Parthians, whose country they invaded. Demetrius then recovered the kingdom, but still persisting in his tyranny and vices, his subjects soon rebelled; Alexander Zabina pretending to be the son of Alexander Balas, laid claim to the crown, and defeated him, on which Demetrius fled to Ptolemais, where his wife Cleopatra then resided; but she ordered the gates to be shut against him, and he fell into the hands of his enemies, who first made him prisoner, and then put him to death. Zabina by this means ascended the throne, and reigned over one part of the kingdom, while Cleopatra governed the rest; but shortly after, Seleucus, who was the eldest son of Demetrius, by this queen, resumed the kingdom, and was slain by the cruel hands of his own mother, after he had reigned one year. Antiochus Grypus, his brother, a very young prince, was then placed on the throne; he, with the assistance of Ptolemy Physcon, king of Egypt, vanquished Zabina, who shut himself up in Antioch; but the inhabitants being informed that he intended to steal a heathen idol for the sake of the gold, drove him away, and after wandering from place to place, he was at length put to death. Antiochus Grypus, being grown to years of maturity, began to take upon himself the authority, as well as name of king: this his mother would not submit to, she therefore prepared a cup of poison, and offered it to him, when he came in hot from hunting; but being apprized of her design, he obliged her to drink it herself, and so put an end to the life of this wicked woman. Grypus having settled his affairs in peace and security, reigned several years without any disturbance.

During

HYRCANUS BECOMES INDEPENDENT. 491

During these divisions, Hyrcanus shook off the Syrian yoke, greatly enlarged his dominions, and made himself wholly independent. He subdued Shechem, the chief seat of the sect of the Samaritans, and destroyed their Temple, which Sanballat had built. He also conquered the Idumeans, and obliged them all to embrace the Jewish religion; and from that time they were incorporated into the Jewish church, and at length lost the name of Idumeans or Edomites, and were called Jews.

Hyrcanus sent ambassadors to Rome, to renew the league which Simon his father had made with the senate, and at the same time to complain of the oppressive behaviour of the Syrian kings. Upon which the senate decreed, that all the places which had been taken from them should be restored; reparation made, and that the Syrian kings should have no right to march their armies through the Jewish territories. Ambassadors were sent from Rome, to see this decree put in execution.

The behaviour of the Romans, in this instance was very honourable, and any other nation might have gloried in their protection and interposition; but when we consider the Jews as the peculiar people of God, they sink in our esteem for thus humbling themselves to heathens.

Hyrcanus being much increased in power and riches, sent his two sons, Aristobulus and Antigonus, to besiege Samaria; which, after a vigorous siege they took, and entirely destroyed, and even caused trenches to be dug every way across it, so that it might never be rebuilt. This was not done out of hatred to the sect of

the Samaritans, for none of them dwelt here, Alexander the great having expelled them (as you formerly read).

In acknowledgment of the friendship of the Romans, Hyrcanus sent the next year ambassadors with a golden cup and shield of immense value, upon which they issued another decree to ratify and confirm the former.

After the conquest of Samaria, Hyrcanus became master of all Judea, Galilee, and several other places in the country round about, and was one of the greatest princes of the age in which he lived: none of the neighbouring princes dared to molest him; but the latter end of his reign was disturbed by internal commotions in his government, from which the Romans could not shield him.

I have already informed you, that the Jews were divided into two sects, called Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees, by their extraordinary strictness in religion had gained to themselves great reputation among the common people, and for this reason Hyrcanus endeavoured to obtain their esteem; having therefore one day invited several principal men among them to a festive entertainment, he asked their opinion of his conduct, and received an answer of general approbation, excepting from one man, who treated him in a very contemptuous manner, which greatly offended Hyrcanus. Jonathan, an intimate friend of his, but a zealous Sadducee, taking advantage of this, prejudiced him against the whole sect of the Pharisees, to whom he from that time became a bitter enemy.

Hyrcanus died the next year after these disturbances, and having had the administration of public affairs both in church and state for twenty-nine years, left the high-

high-priesthood and sovereignty to his eldest son Judas Aristobulus.

John Hyrcanus was an excellent governor and commander, and Israel was in a very flourishing state during his administration; but still they were in *obscurity*, when considered as the *peculiar people of God*. They were indeed victorious and successful over their enemies, for the LORD was still merciful to them in remembrance of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and his faithful servant David, and therefore would not suffer the heathen to dispossess them; but his mercy was exercised only in the *ordinary* dispensations of providence, and therefore we cannot wonder that they were distressed in those instances, in which they could not have been relieved without a *miraculous* interposition in their favour.

In the reign of Hyrcanus, Jesus the son of Sirach, a Jew of Jerusalem, going into Egypt and settling there, translated out of Hebrew into Greek, for the use of the Hellenistical Jews, the book of Jesus his grandfather, which is the same we have in our bibles under the title of *Ecclesiasticus*. The antients call it the *treasury of all virtue*, supposing it to contain maxims leading to every virtue. It was originally written in Hebrew, about the time that Onias, the second of that name, was high-priest at Jerusalem.

Hyrcanus left five sons: Aristobulus, Antigonus, and Alexander, were the three first; the name of the fourth is unknown, but the fifth we are told was called Absalom.

JUDAS ARISTOBULUS MADE PRINCE AND HIGH-PRIEST OF THE JEWS.

Aristobulus succeeded his father. He put a royal diadem on his head, and assumed the title of king;
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this he had no right to do, as he was not of the lineage of David : but he paid no regard to the nature of the Jewish constitution, for he was a man of a most imperious, ambitious, and cruel temper. He cast his own mother into prison, and starved her to death ; and caused his favourite brother to be executed, on an unjust suspicion ; but no sooner was the last fact committed, than he severely repented, and his conscience felt the bitterest pangs of remorse for all his cruel deeds. He had for some time been afflicted with a distemper, which was now increased by the agitation of his spirits, and he expired in great agonies of body and horror of mind, having reigned only one year.

The royal diadem brought neither honour nor happiness to this miserable monarch, who must have been, from the time he first assumed it, a prey to the most tormenting passions, and totally unfit for the duties of the high-priesthood.

Whilst the people depended on the aid and protection of God alone, the high-priest might govern in civil as well as in sacred affairs, till it should please the LORD to raise them up a king of David's line ; but they could have no right themselves to transfer the crown and title to another family, without a divine commission. The prophecies gave them reason to expect a *son of David* as a future king of the Jews ; and though the nature of his kingdom was not at that time perfectly understood ; yet it was their duty to wait and see what the LORD would bring forth ; and as God "*had * removed the diadem, and taken off the crown from the house of Judah,*" those were *usurpers* who pre-

* Ezek. xxi. 26.

A GREAT MASSACRE.

sumed to take it, "till He should come whose right it was."

ALEXANDER JANÆUS MADE KING OF THE JEWS.

As soon as Aristobulus was dead, Salome, his widow, set at liberty his three brothers whom he had imprisoned; and Alexander the eldest, surnamed Janæus took the kingdom. At this time the government of Syria was divided between Antiochus Grypus, and his brother Antiochus Cyzicenus, who harrassed each other with continual wars; of which advantage being taken by Tyre, Sidon and other parts of the empire, they assumed their liberty, and tyrants took possession of them.

After Alexander had settled his affairs at home, he attacked some of these places, and dealt very deceitfully with Lathymus the heir to the crown of Egypt, who came to their assistance; on which a bloody battle ensued, wherein Alexander's army was totally defeated, and he lost thirty thousand men; and must have been entirely undone, had not Cleopatra queen of Egypt come to his assistance.

When Alexander returned to Jerusalem, he went at the feast of tabernacles, to officiate in the Temple as high-priest; where he had great indignity offered to him by the people, who called him reproachful names, and pelted him with citrons. They were instigated to this by the Pharisees, who bore him an inveterate hatred: enraged by these insults, Alexander took instant revenge, by killing six thousand of them: from this time he chose his guards out of the heathen nations, never daring to trust himself with Jews. At last there broke out a civil war between him and his people,

ple, which continued about six years, and occasioned the death of fifty thousand persons; a decisive battle was fought, and Alexander conquered them. He exercised the most horrid barbarities, by which he so terrified the whole party, that they gave him no farther disturbance.

After these civil wars were ended, he had contentions with neighbouring kings: but at the end of three years returned to Jerusalem, and was well received by his subjects: soon after this he died of a disease, which was at first brought on by excessive drinking.

THE REIGN OF ALEXANDRA QUEEN OF JUDEA.

Alexander, by his will, appointed that the supreme authority should descend to his royal consort Alexandra, who made her eldest son Hyrcanus high-priest, but the administration was entirely in the power of the Pharisees. They immediately revoked the decree which John Hyrcanus had made against their traditional constitutions, and put many of the Sadducees to death, by the queen's leave, for she dreaded a fresh civil war. The late king's friends seeing no end to these persecutions, went in a body with the queen's youngest son Aristobulus at their head, to remonstrate against these proceedings; requesting, that if they could have no other defence, they might be placed in the different garrisons of the kingdom, out of the reach of their enemies. To this the queen readily consented, for she heartily commiserated their case; but this was the utmost she could do for them. The Jews were threatened with a powerful invasion by the king of Armenia, but sent ambassadors, who accommodated the difference.

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In a short time after queen Alexandra fell sick and died, being then seventy-three years old. She was a princess of great wisdom and discretion, and if she had not inclined too much to the Pharisees, no exceptions could have been made to her government.

THE REIGN OF ARISTOBULUS KING OF JUDEA.

When Alexandra made Hyrcanus high-priest, she left Aristobulus, his younger brother, to lead a private life: this by no means suited his aspiring temper; as soon, therefore, as his mother was past all hopes of recovery, he used measures to obtain the supreme authority, and Hyrcanus was obliged to submit to him. He retired to live upon his private fortune, but was afterwards prevailed on, by one of his adherents, to attempt the recovery of the kingdom; and he sought the assistance of Aretas, king of Arabia, who supplied him with an army; which being joined by the Jews, Hyrcanus gained a complete victory.

In the mean time the Roman empire spread far and near. Pompey, a famous general, had lately reduced Syria to the form of a Roman province; and Scaurus, one of his lieutenants, being sent with an army as far as Damascus, Aristobulus gained him on his side by the payment of a large sum of money; Scaurus threatened Aretas with the Roman arms in case he did not retire, which obliged him to raise the siege and retreat.

Not long after Pompey himself came to Damascus, where he was attended by ambassadors from several nations, and among the rest from Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. Pompey ordered the brothers to appear before him; they accordingly attended, and many Jews came also to remonstrate against both; alledging, that they had

498 THE SANCTUARY VIOLATED.

had changed the old, and introduced a new form of government; desiring that they might not have a king, but that justice might be administered by the high-priest agreeably to the law of God.

Pompey having heard all parties, saw the injustice of Aristobulus, but left the determination of the affair till he could go to Judea. Aristobulus immediately armed in his defence, and when Pompey arrived he found him shut up in a strong fortress. Pompey was not long before he marched against him, and laid siege to Jerusalem. Aristobulus then, by the promise of a large sum of money, prevailed on him to retire; but failing in the payment, exasperated Pompey, who marched forward, and was received into Jerusalem by Hyrcanus's party; here he met with resistance from the other faction, and there was great confusion in the city; in three months time Pompey prevailed, and put the principal incendiaries of the war to death.

Before he left Jerusalem, he, with several other chief officers, went into the Temple, and caused the most sacred parts of it, even the most holy place to be opened. He visited the treasuries also, but left them untouched; he thought it however adviseable to destroy the walls of Jerusalem, and though he restored Hyrcanus to the high-priesthood, yet he deprived him of all the new conquests of his predecessors, would not permit him to wear a diadem, and obliged him to pay an annual tribute to the Romans. Pompey had hitherto gained great honour, and met with wonderful success; but after this, he sunk in his character, and in his power, which is attributed by Jewish historians, to his profaning the sanctuary.

THE JEWISH GOVERNMENT CHANGED.

Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, attempted to recover the kingdom of Judea. Hyrcanus * being too weak to take the field against him, would have fortified Jerusalem by rebuilding the walls, but this the treaty with the Romans forbid; he was therefore obliged to send to them for forces, upon which Gabinus, who was then the Roman governor of Syria, came to his relief; Alexander submitted, and Hyrcanus was confirmed in the high-priesthood; but the civil administration was taken from the Sanhedrim, the land divided into five provinces, and courts of justice appointed over each of them; and from this time, instead of the Prince, the supreme authority was invested in the Nobles.

Gabinus was a very wicked man, and exercised great extortion and oppression; he was soon removed from his government, and sent into exile, where he lived in a state of poverty for some years.

Crassus succeeded him; he was very eager to acquire wealth, and hearing that there were great treasures in the Temple at Jerusalem, marched his army thither to seize them, and ransacked it of every thing he thought worth taking. He then made an unjust war against the king of Parthia, in which he was slain. It is said, that when the king of Parthia received the head of Crassus, he caused melted gold to be poured down his throat, by way of mockery for his greedy desire of riches.

Calphurnius Bibulus had Syria assigned to him, but nothing remarkable happened to the Jews during his

* He was taken prisoner by Pompey, but made his escape.

500 JULIUS CÆSAR'S DEATH.

government; he returned, just as the war was breaking out between Cæsar and Pompey.

It is very affecting, as well as interesting, to read the history of this contest, but it is foreign to our present subject; I shall therefore only tell you, that Pompey was slain, and Cæsar triumphant.

The Jews were very serviceable to Cæsar in Egypt, on which account he confirmed all the privileges that had been granted them in that country; and ordered a pillar to be erected, in which they were recorded with his decree in favour of them.

From Egypt, Cæsar passed into Syria; here he was addressed by Antigonus, the son of the late king Aristobulus, with complaints against Hyrcanus and Antipater; but Antipater, who was then with Cæsar, pleaded their cause so well, that Cæsar, instead of restoring Antigonus, made a decree that Hyrcanus should hold the office of high-priest, and the principality of Judea in perpetual succession, and that Antipater should be the procurator of Judea under him. This Antipater, who was a man of great wisdom and powerful interest, had two sons, Phasael and Herod; to the former, he gave the government of the country about Jerusalem; to the latter, that of Galilee. Phasael behaved himself well, but Herod was of a very violent temper.

Julius Cæsar returned to Rome after the death of Pompey, great honours were decreed him, but a conspiracy was formed against him, and he was treacherously murdered. He had lately given permission to Hyrcanus to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and during his life the Jews were held in great honour and esteem by the Romans.

Antipater

ANTIPATER'S DEATH. 501

Antipater was poisoned at a banquet by Hyrcanus's butler, at the instigation of Malicus, who was next in power to him; his sons would have revenged his death, but that there was a treaty of marriage on foot between Herod and Mariamne, the high-priest's grand-daughter, which suited his ambitious views, as the Jews were greatly attached to the Asmonean family.

Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, made another attempt to recover the kingdom; and so far succeeded, that Hyrcanus and Phasael were taken and put in chains, and Antigonus took possession of Jerusalem. Here he was besieged by Herod, assisted by a Roman army; the city held out several months with a great deal of resolution, but was at length obliged to surrender. Antigonus submitted, and was led in chains to Rome, and Herod took the kingdom; but not thinking himself secure whilst any of the royal family were alive, he prevailed on the Romans to put Antigonus to death as a common criminal. With him ended the sovereignty of the famous Asmonean family.

THE REIGN OF HEROD THE GREAT.

As Herod was obliged to make his way to the throne of Judea through a great deal of blood, so he found it necessary to establish himself in it by the same means, and he put numbers to death. Hyrcanus continued a prisoner at Seleucia, in Babylonia; but was at length set at liberty, and was allowed to reside at Babylon, at which place were many Jews, who treated him with the reverence and respect due to their high-priest, and the honour due to a king; but he longed to return to his native country. Herod was equally desirous to get him into his power, therefore invited him
with

with flattering promises, and sent an embassy to solicit leave for him to return; which the Parthian monarch granted, and the unfortunate old prince was for some time treated by Herod with apparent kindness and respect.

During the wars which were carried on between Cæsar Octavius, and Marc Antony, (of which you will read a full account in the Roman History) Herod continued a steadfast friend to Antony; but finding he was in a desperate situation, and that he would not hearken to his advice, Herod resolved to make his peace with Cæsar. He had reason to apprehend, that the conqueror would restore Hyrcanus, who had once reigned under the protection of the Romans; therefore, to prevent this, he caused him to be put to death, after he had passed the eightieth year of his life, under pretence of his holding a treasonable correspondence with the king of Arabia.

Josephus tells us, that Hyrcanus was a man of eminent candour, justice, and moderation; but a lover of his ease, and so conscious to himself of his own insufficiency for the offices of publick administration, that he usually intrusted them to other hands, by which means Antipater and Herod made their fortunes.

Herod having obtained an audience of Cæsar, as he entered his presence, laid aside his diadem; he expressed himself with so much intrepidity, that Cæsar, pleased with his spirit, caused him to put on his diadem again, accepted of his friendship, and confirmed him in the kingdom of Judea; upon which he made very large and magnificent presents to Cæsar, and all his friends, and from that time had more of his favour than any other tributary prince of the Roman empire.

Pleased with his success, he returned to Judea; but on his arrival, found a damp to his joy in the troubles

of his own family; which were repeated, till at length he caused his beloved wife Mariamne, to be put to death in the fury of jealousy. When Herod's rage was quenched with her blood, his love for her revived; and the consideration of what he had done, filled his mind with agonies of remorse. These he endeavoured to stifle with feasting and diversions, but all in vain; the idea of Mariamne was for ever present, and he was sometimes in a state of distraction. Soon after, a pestilence happened, which carried off great numbers: this was regarded as a judgment from God, for the queen's death. Herod, from this time was observed to act with more rigour and cruelty than he had ever done before, and so continued to do to the end of his life.

Cæsar Octavius, after the death of Marc Antony, returned to Rome in great triumph, and had the name of AUGUSTUS given to him; which signified something above human, sacred and venerable, and by this he was afterwards called.

Herod having cut off all the Asmonean family and party, thought himself secure in his kingdom; he therefore ventured to deviate in many things from the antient Jewish customs. He built two stately cities, one where Samaria formerly stood, called Sebaste; the other Cæsarea: on the latter he expended vast sums, and it became the safest and most convenient port in all the coast of Phœnicia: he also built a magnificent palace for himself, in which were two apartments; one in honour of Augustus, and the other of Agrippa, the emperor's chief favourite.

Herod having finished his buildings, and finding the people much offended because of the many breaches he had made upon their laws, in order to recover their good opinion,

304 THE TEMPLE RESTORED.

opinion, and make them some amends, formed a design for rebuilding the Temple, which by length of time (having now stood five hundred years) and injury from enemies, was in a very decayed and ruinous condition. In two years he got together all proper materials, when he pulled down the old Temple to the very foundation, to make room for the new one, which in nine years and a half was so far finished as to be fit for divine service; though to complete it, workmen were employed for many years afterwards. Thus did Herod, though he knew it not, make preparations for the reception of the *true King of the Jews*, whose presence was to *glorify* this Temple; which might still be called the *second*, because that was not taken away, nor suffered to lay waste, but only renewed and cleansed from the profanation of the heathen.

Whilst these things were doing in Judea, AUGUSTUS subdued all nations, and the temple of Janus was shut at Rome. In times of war, the custom was to have its gates open, but shut in peace; and it was now the fifth time since the building of that city, that it had been shut, which was in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of AUGUSTUS, and the thirty-third of HEROD's, when a general peace prevailed for twelve years together all over the world.

During this period God sent into the world the PRINCE OF PEACE, the promised MESSIAH, with whose life and doctrines I shall endeavour to make you acquainted; but it will be proper for you first to peruse the following tables, which will assist your memory in the recollection of the principal revolutions which happened in the Jewish state.

TABLES.

PA
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PAT

SHEM
ARPH
SALA
EBER
PELE
REU,
SERU
NAHO
TERA
ABRA
ISAAC
JACOB

TRIE
REUBEN
SIMEON
LEVI,
JUDAH
ISSACH
ZEBUL
GAD,
VO

T A B L E S.

I.

PATRIARCHS BEFORE THE FLOOD.

ADAM,
SETH,
ENOS,
CAINAN,
MAHALEEL,
JARED,
ENOCH,
METHUSALAH,
LAMECH,
NOAH.

II.

PATRIARCHS AFTER THE FLOOD.

SHEM,
ARPHAXAD,
SALAH,
EBER,
PELEG,
REU,
SERUG,
NAHOR,
TERAH,
ABRAHAM,
ISAAC,
JACOB.

III.

TRIBES OF ISRAEL.

REUBEN,
SIMEON,
LEVI,
JUDAH,
ISSACHAR,
ZEBULUN,
GAD,

VOL. IV.

ASHER,
DAN,
NAPHTALI,
JOSEPH,
BENJAMIN,
MANASSEH,
EPHRAIM, } half tribes.

IV.

JEWISH LAWGIVER AND FIRST HIGH-PRIEST.

MOSES,
AARON.

V.

LEADER OF THE JEWS AFTER THE DEATH OF MOSES.

JOSHUA.

VI.

JUDGES OCCASIONALLY RAISED UP TO DELIVER ISRAEL FROM THEIR OPPRESSORS.

OTHNIEL,
EHUD,
SHAMGAR,
DEBORAH and BARAK,
GIDEON,
JEPHTAH,
SAMSON,
ELI, also high-priest,
SAMUEL, a great prophet.

VII.

KINGS OF ALL ISRAEL.

SAUL,
Z

DAVID,

DAVID,
SOLOMON.

After the death of the latter the tribes revolted, and formed two separate kingdoms.

VIII.
KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Reigned.	
1 JEROBOAM	17	} days
2 NADAB	2	
3 BAASA	24	
4 ELA	2	
5 ZIMRI	7	
6 OMRI	12	} years
7 AHAB	22	
8 AHAZIAH	2	
9 JORAM	12	
10 JEHU	28	
11 JEHOAHAZ	17	} years
12 JOASH	16	
13 JEROBOAM II.	41	
An interregnum of	11	
14 ZECHARIAH	6	} mon.
15 SHALLUM	1	
16 MENAHEM	10	} years
17 PEKAIAH	2	
18 PEKAH	20	
An anarchy	9	} years
19 HOSHEA	2	

In the reign of the last king, the ten tribes, of which the kingdom of Israel consisted, were taken by the Assyrians, and carried away captive. The kingdom of Judah, composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the Levites, and such remnants of

the ten tribes as escaped the captivity still subsisted, under the government of the following monarchs from the death of Solomon.

IX.
KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Reigned.	
1 REHOBOAM	17	} years
2 ABIJAH	3	
3 ASA	41	
4 JEHOSHAPHAT	25	
5 JORAM	8	
6 AHAZIAH	1	
7 ATHALIAH	6	
8 JOASH	40	
9 AMAZIAH	29	
10 UZZIAH	52	
11 JOTHAM	16	
12 AHAZ	16	
13 HEZEKIAH	29	
14 MANASSEH	55	
15 AMON	2	
16 JOSIAH	31	
17 JEHOAHAZ	3 mon.	} years
18 JEHOIACHIM	11 years	
19 JEHOIACHIN	3 mon.	
20 ZEDEKIAH	11 years	

In the reign of the last king, the kingdom of Judah was subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and carried away captive into Babylon.

X.
KINGS WHO OPPRESSED ISRAEL AND JUDAH BEFORE THEIR CAPTIVITY.

PUL, king of Assyria, whose kingdom was afterwards divided

divided into three parts,
viz. Assyria, Babylon,
and Media.

KINGS OF ASSYRIA.

TIGLATH-PILESAR,

SHALMANESAR,

SENNACHERIB,

ESSAR-HADDON.

The ten tribes were subdued by Sennacherib, and carried away into a strange land by Essar-haddon his son: several kings succeeded these, but we read nothing of them in scripture till the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who led the king and people of Judah into captivity, and also conquered Assyria, which was then added to the Babylonian empire.

XI.
PROPHETS.

JONAH,

AMOS,

HOSEA,

ISAIAH,

MICAH,

NAHUM,

HABBAKUK,

ZEPHANIAH,

JOEL,

JEREMIAH,

These were sent during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, to warn them and the people to depart from their sins, and to promise blessings to the faithful.

JEREMIAH continued.

DANIEL,

EZEKIEL,

OBADIAH,

HAGGAI,

ZECHARIAH,

hereturn-
ed from
the cap-
tivity.

MALACHI, { the last of
the prophets

These prophesied after the Jews were carried into captivity, till prophecy ceased. They comforted the people during their absence from their own land, and foretold their return, and the fate of various nations; also a great deliverance by the Messiah.

XII.

KINGS OF BABYLON
AND ASSYRIA, TO
WHOM THE ISRAEL-
ITES WERE IN SUB-
JECTION.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR,

EVIL-MERODACH,

NERIGLISSAR,

BELSHAZZAR.

This last king was subdued by Cyrus, king of Persia, who put an end to the Assyrian monarchy, and founded the Persian. He permitted the Jews to return to their own land, and be governed by their own law, but they were still dependant on Persia.

XIII.

XIII.
KINGS OF PERSIA, TO
WHOM THE ISRA-
ELITES WERE IN
SUBJECTION AF-
TER THE DEATH
OF CYRUS.

CAMBYSES,
SMERDIS MAGUS,
DARIUS HYSTASPES,
XERXES I.
ARTAXERXES LONGIMA-
NUS,
SOGDIANUS,
DARIUS NOTHUS,
ARTAXERXES MEMNON,
ARTAXERXES OCHUS,
ARSES,
DARIUS CODOMANUS.

This last king was van-
quished by Alexander the
Great, who put an end to
the Persian monarchy, on
the ruin of which arose the
Grecian empire. After the
death of Alexander, this
empire was divided into
four kingdoms, Egypt, Sy-
ria, Asia, Macedon.

XIV.
KINGS OF EGYPT, TO
WHOM THE JEWS
WERE IN SUBJEC-
TION IN CONSE-
QUENCE OF THE
DIVISION OF ALEX-
ANDER'S KING-
DOM.

PTOLEMY SOTER,
PTOLEMY PHILADEL-
PHUS,
PTOLEMY EVERGETES,

PTOLEMY EPIPHANES,
PTOLEMY PHILOMETER.

During the reign of the
last king, the land of Judea
was annexed to the king-
dom of Syria.

XV.
KINGS OF SYRIA TO
WHOM THE JEWS
WERE IN SUBJEC-
TION.

ANTIOCHUS the Great,
ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES,
ANTIOCHUS EUPATER,
DEMETRIUS SOTER.

In the reign of this king
the Jews made a league
with the Romans.

ALEXANDER BELUS,
DEMETRIUS NICANOR,
ANTIOCHUS THEUS,
TRYPHON,
ANTIOCHUS SIDETES,
DEMETRIUS NICANOR
restored.

In the reign of this king,
John Hyrcanus shook off
the Syrian yoke.

XVI.
ROMAN TRIUMVIRS
ON WHOM THE
JEWS WERE DE-
PENDENT.

POMPEY the Great,
JULIUS CÆSAR, after-
wards emperor,
MARC ANTONY,
OCTAVIANUS, called af-
terwards AUGUSTUS
CÆSAR, Emperor.

XVII.

XVII.

ROMAN GOVERNORS
OF SYRIA, WHO OP-
RESSED THE JEWS
UNDER THE TRI-
UMVIRS.

GABINIUS,
CRASSUS.

The first set up a new
form of government in Ju-
dea. The latter plundered
the Temple at Jerusalem.

XVIII.

HIGH PRIESTS OF JU-
DAH AFTER THE
RETURN FROM
THE BABYLONISH
CAPTIVITY.

JESHUA,
JOIAKIM,
ELIASHIB,
JOIADAH,
JOHANAN,
JADDUA,
ONIAS I.
SIMON THE JUST,
ELEAZAR,
MANASSEH,
ONIAS II.
SIMON II.
ONIAS III.
JASON,
MENALAUUS,
ALCIMUS,

XIX.

PRINCES OF JUDAH.

Raised up by God, and
miraculously assisted to
protect the People from
the cruel Persecution of
Antiochus Epiphanes,
and other Tyrants, who
attempted to dispossess
them of their Land, to
which divine Goodness
had restored them.

MATTATHIAS,
JUDAS MACCABEUS,
JONATHAN,
SIMON,
JOHN HYRCANUS.

XX.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

Who, forgetful that the
Lord had given the in-
heritance to David and
his Seed *for ever*, usurp-
ed the Title, and re-
duced their Country to a
level with Heathen Na-
tions.

ARISTOBULUS,
ALEXANDER JANNÆUS,
ALEXANDRA,
ARISTOBULUS II.
HYRCANUS II.
ANTIGONUS,
HEROD.

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HAVING with the utmost care and attention brought down this work to the time of our SAVIOUR'S birth, I must take a short leave of my readers; as the NEW TESTAMENT with Annotations is not yet ready for publication; but I propose to complete it with as much expedition as is consistent with the importance and difficulty of the undertaking.

I cannot close this volume, without earnestly entreating those persons who have the care of youth, to favour my design with their *particular consideration* before they reject it as too voluminous and expensive; since it is evident, from the impiety and immorality of the age, that the *usual methods* of communicating the first principles of Christianity to young minds, are frequently ineffectual. Were the SCRIPTURES *properly explained*, and *sufficiently enforced in the course of education*, they would infallibly produce the most salutary and beneficial effects; as they contain a system of morality derived from the fountain of divine truth, which would serve as a *standard* whereby to regulate the judgment in other studies, respecting the examples which are worthy of imitation, and the sentiments which may be safely adopted. An early acquaintance with those glorious promises which give hopes of immortal happiness, and with those heavenly precepts which instruct us how to obtain it, would surely be the best security against the dangerous allurements of a vicious and dissipated world: Thus instructed, our Youth would no longer fall an easy prey to the Infidel and the Scoffer; nor dare with prophane lips to deride the sacred Word of God.

This

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This work was compiled with a view to facilitate the acquisition of Christian Knowledge in Schools and Families, without engrossing the time necessary to be employed in the attainment of classical and other polite accomplishments, or without interrupting the performance of domestic duties. The custom which too generally prevails, to the misfortune of the rising generation, of discontinuing the daily use of the BIBLE, will, I fear, operate against me; but those who reverence the SCRIPTURES, will perhaps be induced to honour my performance with a place at least in their School Libraries, and receive it as an humble assistant to their Sunday evening's instruction.

Some persons entertain an idea, that every religious work, intended for the use of young readers, should be *short and concise*; but if I may, without being thought arrogant, presume on the experience of many years, I will venture to say, that at an early age, children may be invited to dwell with pleasure on every part of *sacred History*; nor do I believe it is possible to give them that love for divine subjects, which is necessary in order to make their duty their delight, without a *particular* explanation of the great chain of events, from the creation to the redemption of mankind, as related in the BIBLE. To a neglect of this may reasonably be imputed the deplorable ignorance of numbers in spiritual concerns, who, in respect to human affairs, are well instructed.

I have already offered my reasons for giving the history in the very words of the inspired writers, and hope it will be found, from this circumstance, preferable to the usual substitutes, denominated *Histories of the*

ADVERTISEMENT.

the Bible, &c. For even admitting that compilations of this nature may be executed with the utmost elegance of human art, yet the very best must fall infinitely short of their divine original, degrade the sublime subject, which no language but that of holy inspiration can suit; and, by satisfying curiosity, rather tend to draw the mind from the Scriptures, than to conduct it to them.

In selecting from the contents of the sacred volume, I have attempted to display the infinite perfection of the divine attributes, as well as the peculiar beauty of the historical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and their connection with the prophetic writings; so necessary to be known, in order to the right understanding of the doctrines of Christianity; which I trust will render it useful to such persons also as have not time to study larger works, or are destitute of the means of procuring them.

3 AU 59
In the Annotations I have studiously endeavoured to avoid whatever might tend to puzzle the mind, or raise doubts and objections. In the supplemental part I have carefully restrained myself from expatiating too largely on the history of those nations which were connected with the Jews, thinking it best to keep the attention fixed to the principal object.

Accustomed to meet with indulgence from the candid public, I promise myself a continuance of it; and shall exert my best endeavours to execute the subsequent part of this work in such a manner, as to convey a comprehensive knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, and the character and example of our blessed SAVIOUR.

Brentford,
April 15, 1783.